

The Origin, the Organization
AND THE
Location of the Staple of England

A Thesis presented to the Faculty of Philosophy of the
University of Pennsylvania

BY
ADALINE L. JENCKES

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

PHILADELPHIA, 1908

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THE ORIGIN, THE ORGANIZATION AND THE LOCATION OF THE STAPLE OF ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

THE ORIGIN AND ORGANIZATION OF THE STAPLE.

THE Staple of England played an important part in the life of the nation from the middle of the thirteenth to the middle of the sixteenth century. Having as it did a monopoly of the export of the richest natural products of the realm, its enormous trade made it a potent factor in England's early commercial development. The customs derived from the goods exported through it, formed a large part of the national income. The very great wealth of the merchants of the Staple made it, as an organization, a financial power which was utilized by the crown not only to furnish money for minor military operations, but for nearly a century to pay the garrison at Calais and to keep the walls of that city in repair. The dependence of the industrial cities of the Low Countries upon the chief of all its exports, wool, brought the Staple very early into contact with international affairs. Flanders, Brabant, Holland, Zealand, Artois, each country was eager to have it located within its own territory, and the Staple figured frequently in the treaties, especially with Flanders, before the capture of Calais secured for it a location on the continent free from all international disturbances.

The object of this study is to throw some light on what the English Staple was, to explain its organization and methods of business, and to follow the changes in location to which it was subject from time to time.

Etymologists agree in deriving the word staple from the Low German *stapel*,¹ through the Old French *estaple* or *etaple*. A *stapel* was a heap or pile; a store-house where goods were laid out in order; a mart.² In the documents of the fourteenth century the word evidently means a public market where foreign merchants were obliged to offer their goods for sale.³ *The droit d' estaple* was a monopoly possessed by some city, especially of a maritime country, over the traffic of a river or a group of rivers, by which it could compel all merchants passing up or down the river to offer their goods for sale in public market for the benefit of its inhabitants, before taking them elsewhere.⁴ This form of monopoly was well established in the thirteenth century. In 1178 the merchants of Ghent complained that the town of Cologne tried to enforce the right of staple upon them in their passage up

¹ Du Cange; Littré; Skeat. The idea of fixedness runs through all the meanings of the Low German. (Skeat.)

² *Archives de Bruges*, vol. iv, no. 924, p. 291. . . . quod vos plenum posse habeatis hujusmodi locum forensem stapel vocatum, transferendi

³ *Ibid.*, vol. iii, no. 735, p. 229. Cum sepedicti mercatores dicte hansie Almanie a tempore dictarum commotionum in dicto regno nostro minime frequentarunt, ymo staplam et forum, siue congregationem et ateruum mercimoniarum suarum aliquin apud Durdrest in Holandia et alibi extra regnum nostrum situarunt, tenuerunt, et vendiderunt.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. iii, no. 815, p. 360 (1323). Item, que toute maniere dauoir venant dedans le Zwin quelque jl soit, ancois que lon le vende ou achate, viendra a son droit estaple a Bruges et non ailleurs, dont estaple sera; se ce nest auoir que lon peut metre sus au Dam par ainsi que les marchans laiment la mieulx a metre sus que à Bruges. Cest assavoir vins, velues denrees, etc.

Item, que l'on tiengue à l'Escluse nul estaple de draps, ni taille de draps, etc.

Item, que nul estrainges homs, ne nul de l'Escluse, ne autres, ne porra bois mettre sus à l'Escluse, pour estaple tenir, ançois vendra toute manière de bois à son droit estaple. (Letters of Louis de Nevers, Count of Flanders, regulating the maritime jurisdiction of his cities of Bruges and l'Escluse and the staple of Bruges.)

Ibid., vol. ii, no. 568, p. 142; *ibid.*, vol. vi, no. 1122, p. 53; *ibid.*, no. 1287, pp. 444-5; no. 1301, pp. 458-9. The merchants of the Hanse had taken their wares overland to the fair at Antwerp; Bruges complained that her right of staple had been violated.

Ibid., Tables et Glossaire, Gloss. flam. V^o, *stapel*, pp. 612-3.

the Rhine;¹ while in 1251 the city of Ghent found an injustice in the tribute which the city of Bruges levied on all traffic on the Zwin through the right of staple, and undertook to remedy it by building a canal to the sea, on which there should be no staple.² The right of staple was exercised at Dordrecht in Holland,³ at Bruges,⁴ Mechlin,⁴ Ardenburg⁵ and Damme⁶ in Flanders, and at Antwerp in Brabant,⁷ all before 1300. But this practice of creating in a certain town a monopoly of traffic, was not limited to the continent; for in 1291, Edward I of England made provisions for a staple of wool, leather and skins to be held in each of sixteen towns within his dominions.⁸

In addition to these local staples in the Low Countries and in the British Isles there was, during almost the whole of the period which we are studying, a special Staple in some one of the continental towns, for the sale of English merchandise. Sometimes this English Staple was abolished on the continent and located in the realm. It is this Staple which is the subject of this paper. Just what relation this English Staple bore to the staple of the town where it was located, it is not possible to say; it seems, however, even in its beginnings, to have been entirely distinct from it and to have been moved from place to place at will.⁹

¹ Warnkoenig, *Histoire de la Flandre*, vol. ii, p. 427, Piece Justificatif.

² *Archives de Bruges*, Introduction, p. 464.

³ Melis Stoke, Chronicler of Holland, iv, 243-4; see Davies, *History of Holland and the Dutch Nation*, vol. i, p. 112.

⁴ *Ibid.*, iv, p. 244; see Davies, vol. i, p. 117; Meyer, *Annal. Fland.*, an^o 1296; see Kervyn de Lettenhove, *Histoire de Flandre*, vol. ii, p. 388.

⁵ Warnkoenig, vol. ii, p. 204.

⁶ *Archives de Bruges*, Introduction, p. 465.

⁷ Rymer, *Foedera*, O. ed., ii, 206.

⁸ Hist. MSS. Com., 14th Report, App., pt. viii, p. 6; *MSS. of the Corporation of Lincoln*.

⁹ Melis Stoke, iv, 243-4; see Davies, vol. i, pp. 112, 117; *Cal. of Pat. Rolls*, 1301-1307, p. 435; *Cal. of Close Rolls*, 1307-1313, p. 293, *et al.*

There is some evidence that there were in these countries at the same time other

The connection between this English Staple across the Channel and the staples in the home towns is also obscure. There is no doubt that they existed at the same time. When in 1291 Edward I assigned staples to certain towns in England, Ireland and Wales,¹ the English Staple was, and had been for six years, at Dordrecht in Holland;² also in 1312, the king in council ordained that the merchants should buy their wool, leather and lead in the home staples,³ while at the same time the foreign Staple was being held at Antwerp.⁴ We know that in 1371, during a period when the English Staple was located in the realm but abolished on the continent, it was granted by parliament that a staple should be held at Melcombe.⁵ In 1427, when the Staple was at Calais, parliament granted that Melcombe should be made a port from which merchandise of the staple could be shipped.⁶

staples that might be called "secondary staples," for the king more than once ordered the merchants to go to some other town than the one where the Staple was located. For example, in 1299, while the Staple was still at Bruges, the merchants were ordered to go with their wool to Antwerp, as they used to do. C. P. R., 1292-1301, p. 423. But the Staple was not removed to Antwerp until some years later. Moreover, while it was at Antwerp a similar order was issued with regard to Ardenburg in Flanders. C. P. R., 1301-1307, p. 435. See also Rymer, *Foedera*, O. ed., ii, 737, for a staple at Mechlin at the same time as at Bruges. In 1341 wool was shipped to a staple at Antwerp, although a charter had just been granted establishing the English Staple at Bruges. C. C. R., 1341-1343, p. 299; Rymer, *Foedera*, II, iv, 109. [Unless otherwise specified, references to the *Foedera* will be to the Hague edition.]

¹ *Hist. MSS. Com.*, 14th Report, App., pt. viii, p. 6, *MSS. of the Corporation of Lincoln*.

² Melis Stoke, iv, 243-4; see Davies, vol. i, pp. 112, 117; Rymer, *Foedera*, R. ed., ii, 737.

³ *Annales Paulini, Chronicles of Edward I and II*, vol. i, p. 312. (Rolls Series.)

⁴ *Comptes de la ville de Bruges*, 1305, fo. 13; see Kervyn, vol. iii, p. 160; C. C. R., 1307-1313, p. 293.

⁵ Rot. Parl., vol. ii, p. 304a. Et . . . in Parlement estoit accorde & assentu qe un estaple soit mys & tenue a la Ville de Melcombe.

⁶ *Statutes of the Realm*, 6 Henry VI, c. 6. Every Merchant . . . may freely ship . . . Merchandises of the Staple in the Port of Melcombe, in the County of Dorset, and from thence . . . to the Staple of Calais.

The records also show that in 1377 a staple was removed from Queensborough to Sandwich;¹ in 1378 and also in 1455 there was a staple for wool at Westminster;² in 1404 a staple was appointed at Ipswich and also at Lynn;³ and in 1445 Southampton was made a staple town.⁴ These places are all seaports with the exception of Westminster, which has the neighboring port of London. As there was a Staple at Calais in 1377, 1378, 1404, 1445 and 1455,⁵ it is possible that these English ports were made places from which the merchandise of the staple could be shipped to Calais, as in the case of Melcombe, and that from this they were called staple ports, or simply, staples. If we consider merely that the export of merchandise of the staple was limited to certain ports where the customs and duties were collected, then the connection between the foreign Staple and these staple ports would be one which had reality only in so far as it had to do with the royal Exchequer. But if, on the other hand, they were not only export towns, but also markets where the merchants had to go with their goods before exporting them, then the question arises, was there any connection between these local home staples and the foreign English Staple in the matter of organization? The records of Southampton show that this town, at least, was not created a staple merely for the export of merchandise of the staple, and also that it had an independent organization of the staple.⁶ Southamp-

¹ Rot. Parl., vol. iii, p. 10a.

² C. P. R., 1377-1381, p. 293; Rot. Parl., vol. v, p. 334b.

³ Rot. Parl., vol. iii, p. 560b.

⁴ Hist. MSS. Com., 11th Report, App., pt. iii, p. 45; *Southampton MSS.*

⁵ Chapter iv, pp. 49-50.

⁶ Hist. MSS. Com., 11th Report, App., pt. iii, p. 45; *Southampton MSS.* Letters Patent of concessions to the Mayor and Burgesses of Southampton. "That the said town shall be henceforth and forever 'una stapula tam ad recognitiones debitorum in eadem stapula juxta formam Statuti Stapule in eadem stapula accipiendas, quam ad omnia alia ad hujus modi stapulam pertinencia ibidem facienda et exercenda,' and that on Friday before the Feast of St. Matthew the Apostle,

ton probably was not an exception. Doubtless all the local staples in the home towns had a similar organization independent of that of the English Staple, whether it was in a foreign land or within the realm.

When in 1616 new staples were to be erected in Ireland, the charters which had been in force in 1496 for the government of the staples in England were taken as models, in order to insure uniformity.¹ It is probable that there were home staples at least during the entire period after 1353.²

The Staple should be distinguished from the fair and from the weekly and monthly markets. One distinguishing characteristic is that while the latter were periodical, the Staple was continuous. This idea of its permanence comes out in the application of the word to the town itself where the Staple was held, which after a time was called a "staple town"; we hear also of the "staple laws," "staple merchandise" and "staple merchants" or "staplers."

In every English town where there was a Staple, there were definite bounds within which it was held. If the town was walled, the Staple was bounded by the walls; if unwalled, then it was coterminous with the town.³ The part of the town where it was held came also to be known as the "staple;"⁴ for example, we read in the statutes that the staple of Westminster extended from Temple Bar to Tuthill.⁵ Within the bounds of the staple certain buildings were set

in each year, the said Burgesses and their successors forever shall have power to elect from amongst themselves a person to be mayor and two persons to be constables of the said staple for the ensuing year."

¹ *Cal. of State Papers, Carew*, 1603-1624, p. 320, no. 163.

² The Roll of the Staple from which the Ordinance of the Staple (27 Edw. III, st. 2) is printed contains the appointment of the several mayors and constables of the staple throughout the kingdom for every year from the 27th to the 50th Edw. III [1353-1377], *Statutes of the Realm*, vol. i, p. 341, Note.

³ S. R., 28 Ewd. III, c. 15.

⁴ Littré; *étape*, anciennement, nom donné aux places publiques, où les marchands étaient obligés d'apporter leurs marchandises, pour les ymettre en vente.

⁵ S. R., 28 Edw. III, c. 15.

apart as store houses for the staple merchandise;¹ as the property owners were tempted to ask too high a rent for their houses, it was fixed at a reasonable amount by four discreet men of the town together with certain officers of the Staple.²

The merchandise which was sold in the English Staple consisted of the raw products of the realm, the chief of which were wool, wool-fells, leather, lead and tin. These were known as the "five great staple articles."³ Edward III added worsted cloth, feathers, cheese, butter, honey, osiers, peltries and tallow.⁴ Osiers, peltries and tallow appear only in the list of the year 1376,⁵ and feathers are not mentioned after that year. Honey is not heard of after 1397;⁶ worsted cloth was dropped in 1402;⁷ butter and cheese continued on the list until 1440, when permission was granted to export these articles without regard to the Staple since they were so perishable and brought so low a price that the merchants complained that they could not bear the costs of the Staple.⁸

The manufacturing cities of Brabant, Flanders and Artois consumed the largest amount of English wool, and it was natural, therefore, that the foreign Staple for English merchandise should be located in those lands. This began to be the practice some time in the latter half of the thirteenth century.⁹ As far as can be judged from the meagre records of this period, until the year 1313 the king of England chose which city in these lands should be granted the privilege of

¹ The word staple was doubtless used also for the store-houses where the merchandise was kept; in a list of buildings and other works being constructed in Bruges in the early fourteenth century, there was mentioned "l'étape de la laine." *Archives de Bruges*, Introduction, p. 445.

² S. R., 27 Edw. III, st. 2, c. 16.

³ *Ibid.*, 27 Rich. II, c. 17.

⁴ Rymer, *Foedera*, III, i, 32; iii, 47.

⁵ *Ibid.*, III, iii, 47.

⁶ S. R., 27 Rich. II, c. 17.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 2 H. VI, c. 4.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 18 H. VI, c. 3.

⁹ Melis Stoke, iv, 244; see Davies, vol. 1, pp. 112, 117; Rymer, *Foedera*, I, iii, 168, 181; C. C. R., 1318-1323, pp. 234-5.

having the Staple of England located in it.¹ This arrangement of one continental market for the raw products of England did not arise from the initiative of the merchants; in fact great numbers of them evaded the ordinances which were issued for them to attend it.² At first they were not fined for disobeying, and consequently much wool was smuggled out of the country and taken elsewhere than to the Staple, to the injury of those merchants who did attend it. By the fourteenth century these evasions had become very serious, and in 1313 a charter was obtained for the purpose of preventing this abuse. It was given "at the request of both native and alien merchants," as the native merchants afterwards claimed.³ This charter granted to the "mayor and communalty of the merchants of the realm" the right to choose the place in Flanders, Brabant or Artois where the Staple should be held, and to which all the wool merchants were required to go. To the mayor and a council of the merchants was granted power to convict and fine those guilty of infraction of the charter.⁴

The questions naturally arise, who were these merchants of the realm, and why did they attend the Staple while other merchants would not do so unless under compulsion?

There were in England certain of the merchants of the realm, both native and foreign, whom the king was accustomed to call to consult with him in his council concerning loans, customs and subsidies, grants of wool and other matters

¹ C. P. R., 1292-1301, p. 423; *ibid.*, 1301-1307, p. 435; C. C. R., 1307-1313, p. 293. *Comtes de la ville de Bruges*, 1305, fo. 13; see Kervyn, vol. iii, p. 160.

² *Ordinance of the Staple*, Appendix, pp. 59-61. C. P. R., 1313-1317, pp. 15, 56; 1317-1321, p. 477; C. C. R., 1323-1327, p. 9, *et al.*

³ C. C. R., 1318-1323, p. 234.

⁴ *Breve Domini regis de stapulâ lanarum*, Appendix, pp. 61-2. This document, which is a letter patent, is always referred to in later documents as the "Charter of 20 May, 6 Edw. II." An ordinance was issued on the same day to compel the merchants to go to the Staple chosen by the mayor and the merchants of the realm. C. P. R., 1307-1313, p. 591.

touching their trade and the king's need.¹ These were probably the richest and most influential of the wool merchants. When parliament gave the king a grant of wool, he negotiated with these merchants for the sale of it.² Sometimes he sold it to them outright, at other times he arranged with them for a certain part of the proceeds, after they had sold it in the continental market. They were habitually spoken of as the "king's merchants"³ or the "merchants of the realm." When they had the king's wool to sell, they were obliged to take it to the market which he established;⁴ and it was because of the injury done to them and through them to the king, by not attending the same market, that the other merchants were compelled to go there also. Those merchants of the realm who sold the king's wool formed, then, the nucleus of the famous English Company known in later times as the Mayor, Constables and Fellowship of the Staple; and out of their organization grew the organization of the Staple.

It is obvious from the charter that the merchants already had some slight degree of organization. The whole body of "merchants of the realm" constituted a *communitas*; they were evidently in the habit of acting together, and they had a *major*.⁵ We know that the charter did not create the office of mayor, since a few months before it was given, a "mayor of the merchants of the realm" had been sent on a diplomatic errand to the count of Flanders.⁶ The charter also mentions a council of these same merchants⁷ with which the

¹ C. C. R., 1313-1318, p. 258; 1318-1323, p. 110; 1327-1330, p. 157; 1333-1337, p. 60, *et al.*; C. P. R., 1321-1324, p. 198; Rymer, *Foedera*, II, i, 163.

² C. C. R., 1341-1343, pp. 204, 227, 255-62.

³ C. P. R., 1272-1281, pp. 330-400, *passim*; 1292-1301, p. 366; 1307-1312, pp. 204, 412, 515, *et al.*; C. C. R., 1272-1296, 1307-1313, *passim*.

⁴ C. C. R., 1318-1323, pp. 234-5; 1341-1343, pp. 227, 612.

⁵ The Staple was to be ordained and assigned "per maiorem et communitatem dictorum mercatorum de regno nostro." *Breve Domini regis*, Appendix, p. 61.

⁶ C. C. R., 1307-1313, p. 568.

⁷ Consilium eorundem mercatorum. *Breve Domini regis*, Appendix, p. 61.

mayor was to act in cases of infringement upon the rights granted. There is no indication whether the council was a new institution or whether it had existed before.

It was these special "merchants of the realm" whom the king chose to sell his wool, who first attended the Staple. The center about which they were organized was the king; they were primarily the "king's merchants." But after 1313 the other wool merchants also went to the Staple. The records begin to speak of the "Merchants of the Staple."¹ The Staple became the center about which they were organized, and with this change there came gradually a change in the title of the mayor to "Mayor of the Merchants of the Staple," or simply "Mayor of the Staple."²

In 1327 there was no foreign Staple, but there was a domestic staple in each of sixteen home towns. There was one mayor for them all. The ordinance which was issued to regulate the business of the staple gives no indication of any further development, at this time, in its internal organization.³

The next ordinance is that granted in 1341, when the Staple was set up in Bruges. This gives the impression of a much greater degree of organization. There were by this time constables associated with the mayor; the election of officers was regularly provided for, and special provision made for the administration of justice for all merchants who attended the Staple. The minute directions for the methods to be pursued in exporting wool show that the object for which the Staple was ordained had not been lost sight of.⁴

A statute of the year 1353, called the "Statute of the Staple,"⁵ is the most important document that is known deal-

¹ C. P. R., 1313-1317, p. 15; C. C. R., 1323-1327, pp. 9, 564, *et al.*

² C. C. R., 1318-1323, p. 234; 1323-1327, pp. 14, 378; C. P. R., 1313-1317, p. 15; 1317-1321, p. 477; 1324-1327, pp. 13, 301.

³ C. P. R., 1327-1330, pp. 98-9.

⁴ Appendix, pp. 62-5.

⁵ S. R., 27 Edw. III, st. 2.

ing with the organization of a local or home staple. It was given when, for the second time, there were home staples, but no English Staple on the continent; after this date it was always put in force, with but few changes or additions, whenever there was a similar situation. This ordinance shows that in each town where there was a staple, the merchants who attended it were entirely distinct from the townsmen. They dwelt by themselves in certain streets and houses set apart for them;¹ they elected their own officers, who governed them according to royal ordinances,² and who judged them according to Law Merchant,³ not according to common law. A certain distinct body of usages had grown up about the staple which amounted to laws, and all merchants swore to see these maintained;⁴ offenders against the laws of the staple were confined in a separate prison,⁵ and no officer of the crown could take cognizance of anything touching the staple.⁶ These are some of the early steps in the development of the Company of the Staple. Later records show that the Company could hold property,⁷ that it had a seal,⁸ and that it was granted the right to sue.⁹

Without doubt the merchants became a chartered Company sometime in the reign of Edward III, but no charter of incorporation has been found of earlier date than that granted the Company by Queen Elizabeth in 1561.¹⁰ The merchants themselves, however, claimed that they had been incorporated by Edward III.¹¹ In 1347 the Staple was removed to Calais, when the title of the Company became the "Mayor, Con-

¹ S. R., 27 Edw. III, st. 2, c. 16.

² *Ibid.*, c. 21.

³ *Ibid.*, c. 8.

⁴ *Ibid.*, c. 23.

⁵ *Ibid.*, c. 21.

⁶ *Ibid.*, cc. 5 and 6.

⁷ In 1513 the Mayor, Constables and Merchants of the Staple of Calais were granted a license to acquire lands to the yearly value of £300; C. S. P., Let. and Pap., For. and Dom., 1509-1514, Henry VIII, vol. i, p. 653, no. 4381.

⁸ S. R., 43 Edw. III, c. i. The local staple in the city of York had a seal as early as 1327. C. C. R., 1327-1330, p. 134.

⁹ S. R., 27 H. VI, c. 2.

¹⁰ Appendix, pp. 66-74.

¹¹ C. S. P., Dom., 1651-1652, p. 472, nos. 42 and 43.

stables and Fellowship of the Staple of Calais.”¹ A charter of liberties was granted the Company by Richard II and confirmed by Henry IV, Henry VI,² Henry VIII³ and Edward VI.⁴ As all the charters and patents of the Company were lost when Calais fell into the hands of the French, a new grant was sought from Elizabeth. This was given in 1561,⁵ under the title of the “Mayor, Constables and Society of the Merchants of the Staple of England.” This charter was confirmed by James I, in 1617.⁶ A new charter of incorporation was given to the Company by Charles II in 1669,⁷ and it still exists under it. The Company was, in 1887, an association of about thirty members; it maintained nominally some of its officers, and owned stock to the value of about 4250£, from which annual dividends were paid. But the reason for its existence had been lost long ago. It was no longer a mercantile association; its character had changed to that of a club, meeting occasionally for social purposes.

We have no knowledge of the qualifications for admission into the Company.⁸ There was probably an entrance fee, but no mention is made of it until late in the sixteenth century, when it was 100 marks.⁹ Very little is also known of

¹ C. S. P., Dom., 1651-1652, p. 472, nos. 42 and 43.

² Schanz, vol. ii, no. 116, p. 539 ff.

³ *Ibid.*; also no. 135, p. 589 ff.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Appendix, p. 67.

⁶ Appendix, pp. 74-78.

⁷ *Mayor, Constables and Company of the Merchants of the Staple of England vs. The Governor and Company of the Bank of England.* 21 *Queen's Bench Division*, 160 (Nov. 8, 1887).

⁸ No man could become a merchant of the local staple of Waterford, Ireland, unless he was a freeman of the city, or an Englishman, or else “had his liberte of the kynge.” The mayor and constables of the staple of Waterford could not receive anyone into the freedom of the staple without the advice of the merchants of the staple present, and especially of ten or twelve of the council. Hist. MSS. Com., 10th Report, App. v, p. 306. *Acts and Statutes of the City of Waterford* (1469).

⁹ *R. O. Star Chamber Proceedings*, Henry VIII, vol. ix, p. 23. Printed by Schanz, vol. ii, no. 125, p. 558. In the seventeenth century there was some

the rights and privileges of the Staplers; but freedom to cross the sea at will was evidently a legal right possessed by them from early times.¹ In 1327 the king forbade English merchants to leave the kingdom unless they belonged to a staple;² and in the fifteenth century, when there was war between England and France, merchants going to or coming from the Staple at Calais were exempt from seizure.³

The Staple was not by any means purely a royal expedient, although it was so in a great measure. But it was the merchants who, in 1313, asked to have a single Staple on the continent established for English products.⁴ There were, it is true, complaints against it at various times. Twice the king abolished all local home staples, once in 1328,⁵ and once in 1334;⁶ but they were soon in operation again, and apparently with little or no protest from the merchants. But a reason for maintaining the continental Staple, even when the foreign merchants complained that it was contrary to their right to freedom of trade,⁷ was because it could be made in various ways to serve the ends of government.

It was to a large extent a political agent. In 1285 Edward I transferred the Staple of English merchandise from Bruges, in Flanders, to Dordrecht, in Holland, because of hostility shown by Marguerite and Guy of Flanders, although he admitted that "ni les portez, ni les arrivages de Holland, ne

complaint about the excessive fee of admission. In 1616 the Chancellor, Sir Francis Bacon, warned the towns in Ireland which were being erected into staple towns, not to make it too high. C. S. P., Carew, 1603-1624, p. 329. In 1619 the mayor of Lincoln complained to the council that the rate of admission into the Company was so high that none in Lincoln could become freemen of it, and asked that the wool staplers reduce the fee. C. S. P., Dom., 1619-1623, p. 35.

¹ C. S. P., Dom., 1566-1579, Addenda, p. 434, no. 109. "Further, the very laws of England, by an especial proviso in that old servile statute, gave . . . liberty to pass and repass the seas at pleasure, being free of the staple." *Ibid.*, p. 494, no. 49.

² Rymer, *Foedera*, R. ed., II, ii, 705.

³ *Ibid.*, IV, ii, 19.

⁴ C. C. R., 1318-1323, pp. 234-5. ⁵ S. R., 2 Edw. III, c. 9.

⁶ Rot. Parl., vol. ii, p. 377b. ⁷ C. C. R., 1318-1323, p. 234.

sont mie si bons, ni si connus des mariners come ceux de Flandres."¹ Ten years later, seeking an alliance with the count of Flanders, he withdrew the Staple from Dordrecht and placed it at Bruges again.² At another time one of the things granted to the count in a temporary peace was that the Staple of wool at St. Omer, in Artois, should be suspended while the truce was in force;³ but as the time drew near for the truce to expire, its extension was purchased by the still greater concession of a Staple set up within the very territory of the count, at the city of Bruges.⁴ In 1338, when Edward III was trying to detach Louis de Nevers from his French alliance, he gave power to his ambassador, the count of Guelders, to propose to Louis the re-establishment of the Staple of English wool in Flanders;⁵ and two years later, when the communes had yielded him their allegiance, he gave notice "that in consideration of the aid rendered and promised to him in the towns of Ghent, Bruges and Ypres, and the communes of Flanders, the king, with the assent of his parliament at Westminster, promises that he will establish a wool-staple at Bruges. . . ."⁶

But the Staple was primarily a financial agent. It furnished the machinery for supervising the export of wool, and thus was a check upon the frauds of the custom officers;⁷ it also, for much of the time while it was located in Calais, was directly responsible for the collection and disbursement of all the customs on staple merchandise. This came about in the following way. At about the beginning of the fifteenth century the government began to borrow from the Company of the Staple, which was then located in Calais, certain sums

¹ Rymer, *Foedera*, I, iii, 181.

² Melis Stoke, iv, 434; see Davies, vol. i, p. 117.

³ C. C. R., 1323-1327, p. 9.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 378; C. P. R., 1324-1327, p. 134.

⁵ Rymer, *Foedera*, II, iv, 37; C. P. R., 1338-1340, p. 193.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 511, 512-3.

⁷ Chapter iii, pp. 37-8.

of money to pay the officers and soldiers of the garrison in that town.¹ Sometimes their wages were so much in arrears that the soldiers siezed the wool in the Staple, and held it until the merchants redeemed it by advancing the money for their pay.² This was so disastrous to the wool trade that in 1472 the Mayor and Company of the Staple entered into an agreement with the king by which the soldiers should be paid directly by the Company.³ A grant was made to the Staplers for sixteen years, of all the customs and subsidies on the wools and fells shipped from England to Calais; ⁴ the Company then became responsible for the wages of the officers and soldiers of the garrison, for the fees of certain royal officers,⁵ and for the expenses of the convoy of the wool fleet. This grant was renewed in 1487⁶ for another term of sixteen years, and again in 1503.⁷ In 1516, however, the grant then running was canceled and a new one made for a term of twenty years.⁸ But the wool trade was already declining in the sixteenth century; the company was not able

¹ Rymer, *Foedera*, IV, i, 116; Pro. & Ord., vol. iii, p. 67; Rot. Parl., vol. v, dp. 297, 550, 629.

² Pro. & Ord., vol. iii, pp. 67-8, vol. v, p. 203. In 1456 the soldiers being owed great sums by the king, they took from the Mayor and Merchants of the Staple at Calais 26,050 marks of the money coming from the sale of wool and wool-fells. The king ordered certain merchants who owed him for customs to repay the Mayor and Merchants. Rot. Parl., vol. v, p. 297b.

³ The following is an account given by the Staplers of the manner in which this came about. At one time during the wars between Henry VI and Edward IV, the soldiers at Calais had not been paid for three years. They thereupon seized the Staplers and shut them up in a house until they promised to pay them the arrears in their wages. Br. Mus., Cotton. MSS., Tiberius, D. VIII, fo. 16. Printed by Schanz, vol. ii, no. 129, p. 566.

⁴ Rot. Parl., vol. vi, p. 55 ff.

⁵ These officers were: The Customer and Controller of the great custom in the port of London, and the king's Judges, Sergeants and Attorney. Rot. Parl., vol. vi, p. 55 ff.

⁶ Rot. Parl., vol. vi, p. 395 ff.

⁷ S. R., 19 H. VII, c. 27; Rot. Parl., vol. vi, p. 523 ff.

⁸ S. R., 7 H. VIII, c. 10.

to observe the terms of the grant, and in 1535, being heavily in debt,¹ they were released from the contract and a new license to export granted them for a term of five years, under easier conditions. Instead of paying a certain yearly sum for the privilege of exporting wool, they now were permitted to pay the customs on the actual number of sacks shipped; but they were to continue to pay the expenses of the garrison at Calais, and to fulfil their other obligations.² This license was renewed in 1541,³ and again in 1542,⁴ for one year. In 1553⁵ a license was granted for two years, when it was renewed for fifteen years,⁶ under the same conditions of paying the garrison.

But to pay the soldiers at Calais was not the only use to which the Staple was put; it was also a convenient source from which the king could obtain money without asking parliament for it.⁷ While the Staple was located at Calais it

¹ The king agreed to cancel their debt of £13,033 and arrears of £1388 5s. 2½d. in exchange for £10,000, and all their lands and houses in Calais and the Marches and the County of Guisnes, except Staple Hall and their prison house; their lands were considered to be worth £40 sterling a year. C. S. P., Let. & Pap., For. & Dom., 1535, Henry VIII, vol. ix, p. 240.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, 1540-41, vol. xvi, p. 217; Pro. & Ord., vol. vii, p. 109.

⁴ C. S. P., Let. & Pap., For. & Dom., 1542, H. VIII, vol. xvii, pp. 20, 55.

⁵ *Acts of the Privy Council*, 1552-1554, p. 83.

⁶ Rymer, *Foedera*, VI, iv, 34.

⁷ In 1342 Edward III ordered the Mayor of the Staple at Bruges to pay £800 to redeem Queen Philippa's crown. Rymer, *Foedera* II, iv, 135.

The following is a partial list of the sums borrowed from the Company of the Staple:

1343, £50,000 per year for three years, C. P. R., 1345-1348, p. 19; 1346, 40,000 m. per year for two years, C. P. R., 1345-1348, pp. 133, 277, 569; 1407, £4,000, Rymer, *Foedera*, IV, i, 116; 1423, £4,000, Pro. & Ord., vol. iii, p. 67; 1441, £10,000, *ibid.*, vol. v, p. 164; 1455, £2,530 15s. 8d., Rot. Parl., vol. v, p. 297; 1461, £1,000, C. P. R., 1461-1467, p. 54; 1463, £6,926 7s. 4d., *ibid.*, p. 271; 1464, £32,861, Rot. Parl., vol. v, p. 550b; 1464, £1,000, C. P. R., 1461-1467, p. 378; 1465, £11,728 19s. 2½d., *ibid.*, p. 438; 1467, £10,000, Rot. Parl., vol. v, p. 629a; 1471, £20,276 8s., C. P. R., 1467-1477, p. 270; 1525, £6,500, C. S. P., For. & Dom., 1529-1530, H. VIII, p. 3090; 1529,

contributed largely, in this way, toward keeping the defenses of the city in repair,¹ and it also furnished the means for carrying on minor military operations on the continent.² The money thus obtained was, however, in the nature of loans, and was generally repaid from the customs and subsidies on wool.³

Another very important use made of the Staple was to regulate the circulation of coin in England.⁴ The monetary condition of the country was in great confusion during the

£1,000, C. S. P., Let. & Pap., For. & Dom., 1531-1532, H. VIII, p. 316; 1555, £12,000, C. S. P., For., 1553-1558, p. 193. After 1472 the Company was paying annually £10,022 4s. 8d. for the garrison at Calais; £100 for the salaries of the controller and custom officer at London; £1,000 for the salaries of the king's judges, sergeants and attorney, and also the expenses of the convoy of the wool fleet. Whatever surplus there remained from the customs after these expenses were paid, was handed over to the king. Rot. Parl., vol. vi, pp. 55 ff, 395 ff; S. R., 19 H. VII, c. 27; 7 H. VIII, st. i, c. 10. In 1482 this surplus amounted to £8,000. Cely Papers, pp. 98, 113.

¹ The Treasurer of Calais promised to try to borrow money from the merchants of the Staple towards repairing the walls and towers of Calais. Pro. & Ord., vol. v, p. 400 (1439). The Staple furnished money for the repairs of Calais and for buying ordinance. C. S. P., Let. & Pap., For. & Dom., 1509-1514, H. VIII, p. 516, no. 3832; for paying the workmen for flooding the marches at Calais, and £500 toward the works; *ibid.*, 1540, p. 355; 4d. on every sack of wool and 100 fells toward countermuring the town; *ibid.*, p. 340; £2,000 for the repairs of Calais; Brit. Mus., Cotton. MSS., Faustina, E., vii, fo. 41. Printed by Schanz, vol. ii, no. 128, p. 564. One of the frequent complaints in parliament was that licenses granted to export wool elsewhere than to the Staple were the cause of such a falling off in the customs that the soldiers were not paid, the castle and walls were not repaired, the town was not maintained, and the city was destroyed. S. R., 14 H. VI, c. 2; 20 H. VI, c. 12; 27 H. VI, c. 2; Rot. Parl., vol. ii, p. 323a.

² The Staple loaned, in 1430, 3,500 m. to pay archers sent to the aid of Paris; Pro. & Ord., vol. iv, p. 52; in 1433, 2,000 m. for the siege of St. Wallery; *ibid.*, p. 178; in 1442, £500 to pay the soldiers of Guisnes; *ibid.*, vol. v, p. 200. When the captains of Calais made an expedition, the Mayor of the Staple kept watch in the town with one hundred billmen and two hundred archers of the merchants and their servants, taking no wages from the king. Rot. Parl., vol. ii, p. 358b.

³ See references p. 20, note 7; above, notes 1 and 2.

⁴ This subject is fully treated by Ochenkowski, *Englands wirtschaftliche Entwicklung*, pp. 187-217.

middle ages. One of the evils was the steady outflow of the national coin, while in its place there circulated many different kinds of foreign coin, brought in by the merchants. As long as the merchants evaded the ordinance of 1313 and took their wool to any foreign market they chose, there was no way to prevent them from bringing back much of this foreign coin. An expedient was tried which finally, through the Staple, brought some measure of success.

Every merchant exporting wool was obliged to give security that he would bring back within three months, for each sack of wool exported, a plate of silver worth two marks.¹ The merchant took the plate to the exchange in the Tower of London and redeemed his two marks of security.² But this regulation did not stop the evil. Specie still flowed out of the country, while the merchants brought back only a small part of the proceeds of their sales in the form of bullion; most of it came back in foreign coin. In 1423 the government prohibited any specie being taken out of the realm, except to pay the soldiers at Calais, or for ransoms.³ The laws which obliged all exporters of staple merchandise to take their goods to the Staple at Calais were then enforced with increased penalties.⁴ It was also decreed that for all the goods sold in the Staple, payment should be made in gold or silver bullion, which was to be taken to the mint in Calais, and a certain proportion of it changed into English coin.⁵ The merchants were also prohibited from making a loan to any purchaser of staple merchandise in Calais, of any part of the money received by them for their goods, but were obliged to take it all back into the realm "without

¹ In 1391 Parliament required, instead of a plate of silver, an ounce of gold bullion; Rot. Parl., vol. iii, p. 285a; and in 1399 an ounce of gold of foreign coin. *Ibid.*, pp. 340a, 429a.

² S. R., 14 Edw. III, st. 1, c. 21; C. C. R., 1341-1343, pp. 223, 314.

³ S. R., 2 H. VI, c. 6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 8 H. VI, c. 17.

⁵ £6 out of every 12 marks, £5 out of every 10 marks, and £4 out of every 8 marks, were to be thus converted. *Ibid.*, 8 H. VI, c. 8.

subtely or fraud.”¹ By a statute of 1442, one-third of the bullion was to be converted into coin of the realm at the mint at Calais, and taken back into England.² This requirement was a burden on the merchants, and they petitioned to be released from it;³ but they were relieved only for a time⁴ as in 1463 parliament ordained that the wool should be paid for one-half in English money and one-half in plate or bullion. The coin was to be taken at once into England, and the plate or bullion coined at the mint in Calais and taken into England within three months.⁵ About a century later, in a petition of the Staplers for a new license to export, one of the articles was, that they should not be compelled to bring in any bullion.⁶

The state of the mint at Calais affected the circulation of specie in England, and the rise and fall of the mint depended on the amount of trade at the Staple. The statutes contain many complaints that the mint at Calais was “desolate and destroyed” because merchants were not taking their goods to the Staple.⁷ In this relation between the Staple and the

¹ S. R., 8 H. VI, c. 18.

² *Ibid.*, 20 H. VI, c. 12.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 216-7.

⁴ Pro. & Ord., vol. v, pp. 215-6.

⁵ S. R., 3 Edw. IV, c. 1.

⁶ C. S. P., Let. & Pap., For. & Dom., 1539, H. VIII, vol. xiv, pt. ii, p. 357, no. 819. A petition of the commons in Rot. Parl., vol. iv, pp. 125 ff, shows another plan which was once proposed for accomplishing this object, of providing the realm with English coin. All foreign merchants trading at Calais were to be obliged to change their money at the mint for English coin. Out of this they were to pay for the merchandise bought at the Staple, and the English merchant would thus be provided with coin of the realm instead of foreign coin. Before leaving Calais for home each English merchant was to have his money placed in a purse and sealed by the Treasurer of Calais, and an indenture of the sum made out, one part of which was to be retained by the Treasurer. The other part was to be taken by the merchant to the mayor of London, who should then compare the sum in the purse with that named in the indenture. If the amounts agreed the merchant was to be allowed to depart. Once a year the Treasurer at Calais was to turn in to the Exchequer all the indentures retained by him, which were to be compared with those turned in by the mayor of London. This plan evidently never went into operation.

⁷ S. R., 21 R. II, c. 17; 8 H. VI, c. 17; 10 H. VI, c. 7.

inflow of specie into England may be found one of the explanations of the exceedingly heavy penalties inflicted for taking staple merchandise elsewhere than to the Staple at Calais;¹ and also the chief reason why the Staple remained at Calais uninterruptedly from 1399 until the town fell into the hands of the French.

¹ Rot. Parl., vol. iv, pp. 251b, 359a; vol. v, p. 54a; vol. vi, p. 164a; S. R., 8 H. VI, c. 19; 14 H. VI, c. 5; 18 H. VI, c. 15; 4 Edw. IV, c. 2.

CHAPTER II.

THE OFFICERS OF THE STAPLE.

THE chief officers of the Staple were a Mayor and two Constables. The Staplers claimed that there were officers of the staple as early as 1267,¹ but there is no proof of it. We do know, however, that there was a Mayor in the year 1313,² and that this was the only officer of the Staple³ mentioned until 1341. In 1326, when the Staple was abolished in Flanders and set up in sixteen different places in England, Ireland and Wales, there was still but one mayor for all the local home staples.⁴ But by the charter of 1341, when the Staple was once more established at Bruges, Constables were appointed to act with the Mayor;⁵ and in 1353, when the foreign Staple was again abolished and the domestic staples set up, a Mayor and two Constables were appointed for every place where there was a staple.⁶

Several minor officers were attached to the Staple from time to time as its organization developed. In 1353 a number of "Correctors" were ordained in every place where a local staple was held, whose business it was to record the bargains made between buyers and sellers; but no merchant need employ a Corrector unless of his own free will. To

¹ Chapter I, p. 15.

² C. C. R., 1307-1313, p. 568; C. P. R., 1307-1313, p. 591; *Breve Domini regis*, Appendix, pp. 61-2.

³ C. C. R., 1318-1323, pp. 110, 186, 187; 1323-1327, pp. 14, 378; C. P. R., 1313-1317, pp. 15, 56; 1317-1321, pp. 239, 477, 489; 1324-1327, pp. 13, 134. *Ordinance of the Staple*, Appendix, pp. 59-61.

⁴ C. C. R., 1323-1327, p. 564.

⁵ Rymer, *Foedera*, II, iv, 109; see Appen-

⁶ S. R., 27 Edw. III, st. 2, ch. 21.

[dix, p. 63.

insure impartiality, part of the Correctors were denizens and part foreigners. They were not salaried officers, but were paid by the merchants who employed them, and were forbidden to engage in trade while they held office. They gave security before the Mayor and Constables to perform their duties lawfully.¹ The conduct of the business in the staples required in each place a certain number of such laborers as workers in wool, winders, packers and porters.² There were certain other officers who do not appear until much later, in connection with the Staple of Calais; they are the "Lieutenant," "Broucours," "Weyers," "Potters," "Tresourers," "Clerkys,"³ "Collector,"⁴ "Master,"⁵ and "Marshal."⁶ The Lieutenant supplied the place of the Mayor, who was much of the time in England.⁷ No merchant could hold the office of Mayor, Constable, Lieutenant, Treasurer or Collector of the Staple of Calais who was a resident of Calais or of any place outside of the realm.⁸ The Mayor and Constables, both of the foreign and of the home staples, took their oath of office in Chancery; all other officers and servants of the Staple were sworn before the Mayor.⁹

We do not know whether the early Mayor of the Staple was an elected or an appointed officer; but in 1326, when the Staple on the continent was abolished and there were only the home staples, his election was given to an assembly of merchants. Writs were sent out to the mayors, bailiffs, citizens and burgesses of those cities and towns where the staples were to be held, ordering them to choose from each place two of the richest dealers in wool, wool-fells and leather, who were to go to London and there elect a mer-

¹ S. R., 27 Edw. III, st. 2, c. 22.

² *Ibid.*, c. 23.

³ C. P. R., 1461-1467, pp. 275-6.

⁴ Rot. Parl., vol. iv, p. 59.

⁵ C. S. P., For. and Dom., 1531-1532, H. VIII, vol. v, p. 381, no. 805.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1517-1518, H. VIII, vol. ii, pt. i, p. 1448. The wages of the Marshal were 50s. a quarter.

⁷ Appendix, p. 65.

⁸ Rot. Parl., vi, p. 59b.

⁹ S. R., 27 Edw. III, st. 2, c. 23.

chant to act as Mayor of the staples.¹ The power to elect was gradually extended. The first Mayor and Constables under the charter of 1341 were appointed by the king, for life; but the merchants of the realm were given from that time full power to remove them for suitable cause, and when they died, to fill all vacancies.² When in 1353 a Mayor and two Constables were ordained for each staple place, the king again had the appointment of the first incumbents; but the election of the Mayor was then made annual, and was given to the communalty of the merchants, both denizen and alien.³ He was eligible to re-election. Somewhat later the Constables also became annual officers.⁴

The salaries of the Mayors and Constables were fixed by ordinance in 1354. While there had been one Staple, and that in a foreign country, there had been but one Mayor, and he had received a certain sum a year.⁵ But when, in 1353, this Staple was abolished, and a Mayor and two Constables were appointed in each of the domestic staples, 8d. per sack was assessed on all wool exported, and the receipts in each staple given to the officers in that place. This plan did not prove

¹ C. C. R., 1323-1327, p. 564.

² Appendix, p. 63.

³ S. R., 27 Edw. III, st. 2, c. 21. In 1429 parliament ordained that the then acting Mayor of the Staple at Calais should continue in office for two years, "for certain great and notable causes concerning the Honour of our Sovereign Lord the King and the common weal of all his Realm." S. R., 8 H. VI, c. 25. The Mayor and Constables of the local staple of Southampton were elected by the burgesses, not by the merchants of the staple. See chapter i, p. 9, note. In some cases the Mayor of the town in which a local staple was situated was also Mayor of the staple. This was so in Bristol. Wm. Hunt, *Bristol*, p. 77 (Historic Towns Series). In Waterford, Ireland, not only was the Mayor of the town the Mayor of the staple, but the Sheriffs of the town were the Constables, and the Gaoler of the town was the Marshal of the staple. Hist. MSS. Com., 10th Report, App. v, pp. 282, 284. *Municipal Archives of Waterford*.

⁴ *Confirmation by Henry VI of Charter of Richard II*; printed by Schanz, vol. ii, no. 116, p. 539 ff.

⁵ The Mayor of the Staple also received, in addition to his salary, one-third and sometimes one-half the forfeiture paid by those merchants who were found guilty of evading the ordinances and shipping wool elsewhere than to the Staple. Appendix, p. 64; S. R., 8 H. VI, c. 19.

satisfactory, as some got too much and some not enough. It was therefore ordained that a tax of 4d. per sack should be levied in each place on all the wool exported. If at the end of the year the tax at one place amounted to more than enough to pay the salaries of the officers there, the surplus was used to pay the salaries in some place where the tax was not sufficient. If anything then remained it went to the common profit of the Company to buy new weights, etc.

The salaries at the different home staples varied considerably; for instance, the Mayor of Westminster received 100£ per year, and the Constables 10 marks each; the Mayors of York, Kingston-on-Hull, Norwich and Winchester 20£, and the Constables 100s. each; the Mayors of New Castle-on-Tyne, Chichester and Exeter 10£, and the Constables 5 marks each. If a Mayor or Constable, after having been elected, refused to serve, he forfeited to the Company a sum equal to his salary.¹

The duties of the Mayor and Constables were both executive and judicial. As to the first they had a general oversight of all the business transacted in the Staple and saw to it that all the ordinances of the Staple were enforced. When the Staple was located across the channel, it was their duty to see that no wool was brought into the Staple which had not been sealed with the king's seal "cocket" and paid duty at the place of export. For this purpose they had to be present at the port of entry, and inspect every cargo before it could be unloaded; they must view the weighing of the wool, and receive and forward to the Exchequer the part of the indenture brought by the ship master from the custom officer.² It was also their duty to inquire for all merchants who took their cocketed wool elsewhere than to the Staple, and if they were found within the bounds of the Staple, to

¹ S. R., vol. i, p. 343. *Ordinance of the Fees of the Mayor and Constables of the Staple*. Rot. Stapule de anno 28 Edw. III, m. 17.

² C. C. R., 1341-1343, pp. 190, 314, 393; C. P. R., 1343-1345, p. 273.

arrest and imprison them until they paid their fines of 60s per sack. They could levy a reasonable tax on the merchants when the business of the Staple required it. They also had power to appoint deputies to govern in their absence when they went to England, as they were obliged to do once or twice a year, to consult about the management of the Staple.¹

When there was no foreign Staple, but the several staple places within the realm, it was their duty to give certificates to the merchants for their wool, wool-fells and leather, and to seal with the seals of the Mayor and at least one of the Constables, every sack of wool which left a staple; and also to make indentures with the custom officers for all wool, wool-fells and leather exported.² If a staple was in an inland town, the merchandise could not be taken to the place of export until it had been certified by the Mayor.³

It was also the duty of the staple authorities to have a supervision over the storehouses for the merchandise of the staple and to see that excessive rent was not charged for them.⁴ They protected the merchants, both native and foreign, from infringements on their liberties; they could also arrest and try any royal officer who attempted to take prises within the bounds of a staple,⁵ or to levy purveyance on the goods of any foreign merchant.⁶

But by far the most important duty of the Mayor and Constables was the administration of justice. They had jurisdiction over all pleas for debt, contract and trespass whether committed within or without a staple, when one party was a merchant or a servant of a staple.⁷ Justice was admin-

¹ Appendix, p. 65.

² C. C. R., 1323-1327, p. 585.

³ C. C. R., 1327-1330, p. 134.

⁴ S. R., 27 Edw. III, st. 2, c. 16.

⁵ S. R., 27 Edw. III, st. 2, c. 4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, c. 2.

⁷ *Ibid.*, c. 8. By this statute, if a felony was committed within the bounds of the staple, the Mayor of the staple, with others, was to be assigned justice to hear the case within the staple, according to common law. But this power was removed by statute 36 Edw. III, c. 7, and thereafter felony was to be tried as it had always been before the Statute of the Staple of 1353.

istered according to Law Merchant, but a merchant stranger, whether plaintiff or defendant, might sue at common law without the bounds of the staple, instead of at Law Merchant before the Mayor and Constables within the staple, if he wished.¹

The inquest was employed in the staple court, and its composition was such as to secure impartiality. If both parties to a suit were natives, the jurors were Englishmen; if foreigners, the jurors were foreigners; if one was a native and one a foreigner, the jurors were equally divided, provided there were a sufficient number of foreigners in the town. If not, then the inquest contained as many foreigners as there were in the town who were not parties to the suit, and the remainder were natives.² Moreover, the foreign merchants had the right to choose two of their number to sit with the Mayor and Constables to hear the complaints made against any of them, and to see that speedy justice was done.³

In all cases tried before the Mayor and Constables, appeal could be had to the Chancellor and the king's Council.⁴ In 1427 it was decreed that no suit commenced before the Mayor and Constables should be removed as long as Law Merchant accorded with the common law of the land;⁵ and the removal of a case from a staple court was said to be a thing unknown.⁶

The Mayor and Constables could arrest and imprison offenders for debt and trespass committed in a staple, and in each staple place a prison was set apart for their safe keeping. The officers of the town were obliged to render the staple authorities all the assistance they needed in the execution of this duty.⁷

¹ S. R., 27 Edw. III, st. 2, c. 8; 36 Edw. III, c. 7.

² *Ibid.*, 28 Edw. III, c. 13.

³ *Ibid.*, 27 Edw. III, st. 2, cc. 19 & 24.

⁴ *Ibid.*, c. 24; Rot. Parl., vol. iv, p. 328a.

⁵ Rot. Parl., vol. vi, p. 328a.

⁶ *Wars of the English in France, Henry VI*, vol. i, pp. 465-469. (Rolls Series.)

⁷ S. R., 27 Edw. III, st. 2, c. 21.

Recognizance of debts within the staple, whether the party was a merchant or not, was taken by the Mayor before one or both of the Constables, and when executed at Calais was of the same force within the realm as though taken before the Mayor and Constables of a staple within the realm.¹

With the exception of the appeal to Chancery, the government of the staples in both administrative and judicial affairs was left entirely to the staple authorities, the king's justices and other ministers being prohibited from executing their office within the bounds of a staple.² Every regulation in the statutes and ordinances points to the greatest care being taken, even in minute details, to secure conditions in the government of the staples which would render commercial intercourse easy, and give ample protection to the foreign as well as to the native merchants.

¹ S. R., 10 H. VI, c. 1.

² *Ibid.*, 27 Edw. III, st. 2, cc. 5 & 6.

CHAPTER III.

REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE BUSINESS OF THE STAPLE.

THE government had a strict supervision over the business connected with the export of wool, wool-fells and leather. From the Statutes and the Rolls of Parliament it is possible to form a very clear idea of how the transactions in a staple were carried on.

The Statute of the Staple of 1353 is the most detailed statement of the regulations for the home staples. By this Statute¹ all merchants, alien as well as denizen, were allowed to go about the country and buy up wool wherever they pleased, but they were obliged to take it to a staple before it could be exported.² Wool-growers, however, were not obliged to wait for the merchants to come to them, but could take their wool to a staple if they chose.³ Before this date alien merchants had been prohibited from buying anywhere except at one of the staples,⁴ or at the markets and fairs;⁵ native merchants, on the other hand, had been allowed to buy anywhere, and if, after staying forty days at a staple the wool was not sold, they could take it elsewhere provided they did not sell to aliens.⁶ In 1332, native as well as alien merchants had been prohibited from selling anywhere except at one of the staples.⁷

There was great danger when the merchants were free to go about the country buying up wool, that they would make agreements among themselves to keep down the price. They

¹ S. R., 27 Edw. III, st. 2.

² *Ibid.*, 27 Edw. III, st. 2, c. 3.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ C. P. R., 1327-1330, pp. 98-9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1330-1334, pp. 362-3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1327-1330, pp. 98-9.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1330-1334, pp. 362-3.

were prohibited from doing so under penalty of forfeiture and imprisonment.¹ Nevertheless, alien merchants in particular took such advantage of the poverty of the people that the commons finally in 1455 petitioned that they should not be allowed to go about the country, but should be obliged to buy their wool at the ports of London, Sandwich or Southampton, or at the "Towne of Westmynster, where of olde tyme Estaple hath been and yet is."² The petition was granted.

In 1390, when alien merchants who brought goods into England were obliged to buy staple merchandise to the value of one half their imports, native wool merchants were prohibited from selling anywhere except at a staple, and from buying anywhere except from wool-growers or tithe-payers.³ The native merchants were, however, allowed by this act to buy wool for the purpose of making cloth. This interest in the manufacture of cloth, which here appears for the first time in connection with the staple regulations, had grown to such an extent by 1463, that foreign merchants were prohibited, on pain of forfeiture, from buying or exporting wool, in order that sufficient might be kept in England for the cloth makers.⁴ Until this prohibition of 1463 the export of wool, wool-fells and leather had been, in accordance with the Statute of 1353, the exclusive privilege of foreign merchants,⁵ except when it was temporarily given to natives in

¹ C. P. R., 1327-1330, pp. 98-9; 1330-1334, pp. 362-3; S. R., 27 Edw. III, st. 2, c. 3.

² Rot. Parl., vol. v, p. 334b.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. iii, p. 278a.

⁴ S. R., 3 Edw. IV, c. 1. "To the Intent that sufficient Plenty of the said Wools may continually abide and remain within the said Realm, as may competently and reasonably serve for the Occupation of Cloth makers [of England] . . . the king . . . hath ordained and established . . . that no Person, Alien nor Stranger born . . . shall buy or ship any manner of Wools or Woolfels . . . within any part of the same Realm or Wales, or them or any of them carry out of the same Realm or Wales."

⁵ *Ibid.*, 27 Edw. III, st. 2, c. 3; 38 Edw. III, st. 1, c. 2; 43 Edw. III, c. 1; 14 Rich. II, c. 5.

return for an increase in customs, a grant of wool, a subsidy or an aid.¹ The higher export rates paid by foreign merchants explains this restriction on the denizens.²

The merchandise could be exposed for sale in a staple every day in the week except Sunday and Feast days; no wool could be shown or sold within three miles of a staple by a merchant, but a grower of the wool could sell it anywhere.³

After the merchant had bought his wool, wool-fells or leather, it had to be taken to a home staple before being exported. If the staple was in a seaport, the wool, having been weighed by the king's standard weights in the presence of the custom officer, was sealed by the official seal of the Mayor of the staple. An indenture was then made out between the Mayor and the custom officer, of all the wool and lead that had been weighed and of all the other merchandise which had come there; and after the customs were paid, the merchant was free to export his goods wherever he pleased provided there was no Staple abroad. But if the home staple was at an inland town, the wool, after being weighed by the merchants, probably in the presence of some staple officer, was sealed by the Mayor of the staple; then, the customs having been paid, a certificate for the wool and other merchandise, and for the duty paid, was made out by the Mayor and officially sealed. The goods were then taken to a certain prescribed seaport, where the wool was weighed again, in the presence of the custom officer.⁴ The regulations here set forth are somewhat deficient; they do not state, for

¹ S. R., 31 Edw. III, st. 1, c. 8; 34 Edw. III, c. 21; 36 Edw. III, c. 11; 5 Rich. II, st. 2, c. 2.

² The duties paid by native merchants were: 6s. 8d. for each sack of wool; 6s. 8d. for 300 wool-fells; 13s. 4d. for a last of hides. Those paid by aliens were: 10s. for a sack of wool, 10s. for 300 wool-fells, and 20s. for a last of hides. S. R., 27 Edw. III, st. 2, c. 1.

³ *Ibid.*, 28 Edw. III, c. 14. The staple at Westminster began on the next day after the Feast of St. Peter ad Vincula. John Stow, *Survey of London*, p. 40.

⁴ S. R., 27 Edw. III, st. 2, c. 1.

instance, that the merchant must show his certificate to the customer at the second weighing; but this must have been done, as this second weighing was without doubt a precaution taken to prevent wool which had not paid duty from being exported. Neither does the Statute state that an indenture was made out in these ports for the wares which had come from an inland staple; but we are led to infer that such must have been the procedure, since an indenture was made out for all the staple merchandise exported from the other ports.¹ It should be noticed that in the case of the inland staple towns the Mayor of the staple acted as collector of customs; and also that there must have been staple magistrates in the ports prescribed for these towns to make out the indentures there.

If the wool was bought at a place between a staple and the sea, and was to be carried to the staple by water, precautions were taken to prevent its being carried directly out of the country without going first to the staple. Before the merchant could ship his goods he was obliged to make out an indenture with the bailiff of the town, showing how much he was shipping; then the merchant and the ship master gave oath and security that they would go to the staple and nowhere else and unload the cargo before exporting it. The bailiff sent one part of the indenture to the Mayor of the staple by the ship master; ² the other part was sent to the Mayor at the expense of the exporter by some man for whose honesty he would answer.³

The ordinance of 1341 shows the course to be followed when there was a Staple across the channel. The goods having been brought to a port where the king's custom officers were, the merchant took an oath that the wool was avowed under the name of the owner, and gave security that he would

¹S. R., 43 Edw. III, c. 1. This statute, which re-enacts the regulations of 1353, distinctly states that an indenture was to be made out in these special ports between the customer and the Mayor and at least one of the Constables of the staple who were in these ports.

²C. P. R., 1330-1334, pp. 362-3.

³S. R., 27 Edw. III, st. 2, c. 15.

truly take it to the Staple and not elsewhere. An indenture was then made out between the custom officer and the merchant, one part of which was sealed by the seal of the exporter and the other by the king's seal "cocket." The indenture specified the oath and security, the owner of the wool and the number of sacks exported. The part under the seal of the exporter was kept by the custom officer to be sent in to the Exchequer when he rendered his accounts; the other part, under the seal "cocket," was given to the ship master, who then proceeded to the Staple or to the harbor nearest it. Here he could not unload the cargo until it had been inspected by the Mayor and the Constables of the Staple, and the other part of the indenture given to them to be by them turned in to the Exchequer.¹ The wool was then weighed again in the presence of the Mayor of the Staple, and sometimes of some royal official as well,² before it was taken to the Staple and exposed for sale. All the wool found which had not been cocketed was forfeited, together with the ship in which it was laden.³

The Staple thus provided the machinery for a strict supervision over the collection of customs. By this system of checks, made effective by repeated weighings, and by the certificates and indentures of the Mayor and Constables, an attempt was made to prevent fraud on the part of the custom officers and exporters.

But in spite of all the regulations there was much illegal shipping carried on. A great deal of wool, after it had been cocketed, was taken to other foreign markets instead of to the Staple. There were always complaints against this, but they became especially numerous in the last half of the fourteenth and throughout the fifteenth century, after the Staple was

¹ Appendix, p. 63. Mention of the oath is found in earlier documents; e. g., *Ordinance of the Staple* (1320), Appendix, p. 60; C. C. R., 1318-1323, pp. 243, 246, *et passim*; 1341-1343, p. 223; S. R., 14 Edw. III, st. 1, c. 21.

² C. C. R., 1341-1343, p. 393.

³ Appendix, p. 63.

established at Calais. These complaints mention the loss to the king of the customs and subsidies; that the mint at Calais was not sustained; that the merchandise was sold at so low a price outside that no one would go to the Staple, so that the merchants of the Staple were ruined and the town of Calais was not maintained.¹ In order to escape the heavy penalties for this violation of the Staple ordinance, the guilty merchants did not return to England, but had their wool sent to them cocketed under the name of merchants who were innocent. Many foreign merchants also, in order to avoid the heavier duties levied on aliens, had their wool cocketed under the names of native merchants who were willing to incur the risk of the heavy penalties which were inflicted for cocketing as their own the wool of other merchants.²

Wool was also taken out of ports uncocketed,³ through the connivance of the custom officers, who accepted bribes from the merchants to allow the wool to go out unweighed and without paying duties. Goods were also smuggled out of creeks and places where there were no custom officers. The penalty for this was forfeiture of the ship and all the merchandise of whatever kind found in it. Informers against smuggling were encouraged by a reward of a large part of the forfeiture,⁴ and the act was finally made a felony.⁵ The losses to the state through these various forms of evading the Ordi-

¹ *Ordinance of the Staple*, Appendix, pp. 59-60; C. C. R., 1341-1343, p. 314; 1467-1471, p. 489, *et passim*; Rot. Parl., vol. ii, p. 323b; S. R., 8 H. VI, c. 17; 10 H. VI, c. 7; 14 H. VI, c. 2; 18 H. VI, c. 15; 4 Edw. IV, c. 2.

² *Ordinance of the Staple*, Appendix, p. 60; C. C. R., 1339-1341, p. 177; S. R., 21 Rich. II, c. 17. In 1442 there was a petition to parliament that native merchants carrying wool, etc., elsewhere than to the Staple, should pay the same customs as aliens, unless they had licenses. Rot. Parl., vol. v, p. 54.

³ C. P. R., 1321-1324, p. 164. The collectors sealed blank "cockets" and gave them to merchants to fill out for themselves the amount of wool, etc., exported. S. R., 11 H. VI, c. 16.

⁴ S. R., 2 H. VI, c. 5; 8 H. VI, c. 19.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 11 H. VI, c. 14; 14 H. VI, c. 5.

nance of the Staple were very great.¹ The custom officers who permitted illegal shipping were made the subject of the same penalties as the shippers,² and finally all export was prohibited except from certain specified ports, where the king's beams and weights were kept. In order to insure still greater control over the export trade, all merchants shipping wool were required to bring from Calais a certificate from the customer at that port showing that they had gone there, which was to be deposited in the treasury within a year from the time of sailing.³

There were exceptions to the general regulation that all staple merchandise must be shipped to the Staple. The merchants from Italy and Catalonia were granted permission under Edward III⁴ to take their wool, etc., to the west "through the straits of Marroch," instead of to Calais; and always after the statute of Richard II of the year 1378, they were mentioned as an exception when the Staple Ordinance was enforced. They paid the dues and customs of Calais, and gave security that they would not go anywhere to the east unless they went to Calais. Southampton was mentioned as their special place of export.

A similar exception was made in the case of the burgesses of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Berwick, who were allowed to ship to specially appointed markets in Brabant and Flanders,⁵ the wool grown in the northern counties of England and in Scotland, which was of a poorer quality than that from the rest of England. These northern merchants declared that this wool could not compete with that sold at the Staple,⁶ and

¹ The customs which formerly amounted to £68,000 had fallen in 1449 to £12,000. S. R., 27 H. VI, c. 2.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, 4 Edw. IV, c. 2.

⁴ Rymer, *Foedera*, R. ed., II, i, 264; II, ii, 768; S. R., 2 Rich. II, st. 1, c. 3.

⁵ The places to which the merchants of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and of Berwick were allowed to go were, Middleburg and Bruges, Pro. & Ord., vol. iii, p. 39; Barrowe in Brabant, Rot. Parl., vol. vi, p. 164b; S. R., 14 Edw. III, c. 3; to Bruges for one year, and for one year into Zealand, Pro. & Ord., vol. v, p. 227.

⁶ Pro. & Ord., vol. iii, p. 355.

would not bring a price which would enable them to bear the expenses of the Staple. The staple merchants, however, were willing to give for the wool of Newcastle and Berwick the price it brought in the Flemish market over and above the customs and subsidies, which under the other arrangement were lost to England.¹ The license was repealed more than once,² but as often granted again, in spite of the injury done to the Staple at Calais.³ A financial transaction with the king can be clearly seen here.

The licenses granted to individual merchants to ship wool free of custom and without going to the Staple⁴ may be classed with the two preceding exemptions. The granting of licenses was a royal prerogative, and was used to reward merchants for services and to repay loans. Although this caused a direct loss to the state revenues, and parliament remonstrated against it,⁵ yet it was extensively used as a means of satisfying the more personal as well as the public needs of the king.

There does not appear in these regulations for the conduct of the business of the Staple any care for the interests of the merchants, but merely for the collection of duties. The Staple became a great financial agent, and it was because of the use which could be made of it that the government fostered the institution as long as wool was the chief article of export.

¹ S. R., 8 H. VI, c. 21.

² *Ibid* ; Pro. & Ord., vol. vi, p. 117; Rot. Parl., vols. iii, iv, *passim*.

³ Rot. Parl., vol. iv, p. 379a; Pro. & Ord., vol. v, p. 227.

⁴ C. P. R., 1467-1477, pp. 389, 547; C. C. R., 1339-1341, p. 3, *et passim*; 1341-1343, p. 299; Pro. & Ord., vol. iii, p. 253; vol. v, p. 223.

⁵ Rot. Parl., vol. ii, p. 323a; vol. iii, pp. 465b, 500b, 661b; S. R., 21 R. II, c. 17; 27 H. VI, c. 2.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LOCATION OF THE STAPLE.

THE practice of having one particular Staple for English merchandise located in one or other of the three provinces of Brabant, Flanders or Artois, was probably begun in the reign of Henry III.¹ The native merchants declared, in 1320, that there had been a Staple in those lands in Henry III's lifetime; and in the sixteenth century the Company of the Staple set up a claim that they could prove the existence of such a Staple, with officials, in 1267.² We may concede that the Staplers had proofs of their statement, since the Merchant Adventurers, with whom they were contending for the export trade in woolen cloth, admitted the claim of their adversaries. But there is no evidence of the town where it was located, and no contemporary record of its existence at that time has been found.³

The earliest record which is known of a Staple for English merchandise is that of the establishment of a wool Staple at Dordrecht, in Holland, in 1285.⁴ Flanders was the principal

¹ C. C. R., 1318-1323, p. 235.

² Calthorpe's MS., vol. xx, fo. 255; printed by Schanz, vol. ii, no. 135, p. 588. A series of articles setting forth the grounds for the claim of the Staplers of their right to trade in woolen cloth.

³ Malynes, in the *Centre of the Circle of Commerce*, says that "There are records in the Pipe Office of the Exchequer mentioning that they then [1267] had their staple at Antwerp for the conducting of the vent of English staple wares." See for this quotation, Anderson, *History of Commerce*, vol. i, p. 288. Duke, *Pro-lusiones Historicae*, vol. i, p. 59, evidently uses the same source. Malynes was writing in too great heat of controversy for the statement to have much weight, and it has never been corroborated.

⁴ Melis Stoke, iv, 243-4; see Davies, vol. i, p. 112; Kervyn, vol. ii, p. 358; Rymer, *Foedera*, I, iii, 3, 6. *Convention between the Count of Holland and the King of England*.



MAP SHOWING STAPLE PLACES IN THE BRITISH ISLES.

market for English wool before this; but the trade between the two countries was constantly interrupted by political and commercial differences. The marriage alliance between Edward, Prince of Wales, and Philippa, daughter of Guy de Dampierre, count of Flanders, concluded in 1280, seemed to promise a peaceful settlement of all the difficulties. But the sympathies of Guy were drawn to the cause of Edward's enemy, Philip of France, and the projected marriage was abandoned. Arrests and confiscation of merchandise followed on both sides, and Edward, at the request of the merchants of Holland, who were jealous of the Flemish trade, granted them the coveted monopoly.¹

This establishment of the Staple at Dordrecht, in the territory of their neighbor, made the Flemish merchants dependent on the markets of Holland for their wool.² The resentment which the count of Flanders felt at this treatment caused him to strengthen his relations with Philip the Fair, whereupon Edward prohibited individual merchants from carrying any wool into the county, treating Flanders precisely as he did the country of his French enemy.³ In 1297, however, the count turned against Philip, and made an offensive and defensive alliance with Edward, and probably about this time the wool Staple was removed from Dordrecht, and established at Bruges.⁴ It remained there until some time after the battle of Courtrai (1302), when it was removed to Antwerp.⁵ It was still held at Antwerp in 1310,⁶ and doubtless for four years longer; then St. Omer in Artois was chosen for

¹ Varenbergh, *Relations Diplomatiques*, pp. 164-5.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 165-6.

³ Champollion, *Documents inédits*, vol. i, Lettres 214, 317; see Varenbergh, p. 177.

⁴ Rymer, *Foedera*, I, iii, 168, 177; Melis Stoke, iv, p. 244; see Davies, vol. i, p. 117; Meyer, *Annal. Fland.*, a° 1296; see Varenbergh, pp. 180, 181.

⁵ *Comptes de la ville de Bruges*, a° 1305, fo. 13; see Varenbergh, p. 181; Kervyn, vol. iii, p. 160.

⁶ C. C. R., 1307-1313, p. 293.

it, with the permission of the king of France.¹ In the same year the count of Flanders asked Edward II to consent to the re-establishment of the Staple of wool at Bruges;² but the political relations of the two countries were disturbed, since the Flemish people were disposed to render aid to Scotland, and nothing further is heard of the request. The Staple was still in St. Omer in February, 1315,³ but the treatment to which the English merchants were subjected by the sailors of Calais⁴ made its removal advisable, and it was set up in Antwerp again, probably before the close of the year.⁵ In 1318 Robert of Flanders renewed the request for a Staple of English merchandise; and as the death of Louis of France had removed the cause of much of Edward's hostility toward Flanders, the English king called together the merchants of the realm to consult with regard to granting this favor.⁶ But the assistance which the Flemings continued to give to the Scotch was a constant cause of resentment to England, and the negotiations did not succeed. The Staple was at Antwerp until 1320,⁷ when it was once more located in St. Omer,⁸ where it remained for the next three years.

The friendly relations between England and Flanders were strengthened after Louis de Nevers became count, and a truce was arranged in 1323, which among other things provided for freedom of trade to all Flemish and other alien merchants during the truce, without regard to the Staple at St. Omer.⁹ This truce was prolonged from time to time,¹⁰ and

¹ Rymer, *Foedera*, II, i, 66; C. C. R., 1313-1318, p. 219.

² Rymer, *Foedera*, II, i, 69-70.

³ C. C. R., 1313-1318, p. 219.

⁴ Rymer, *Foedera*, R. ed. ii, 279-81.

⁵ Rymer, *Foedera*, II, i, 90; C. C. R., 1313-1318, p. 315.

⁶ Rymer, *Foedera*, II, i, 163; C. C. R., 1318-1323, p. 110.

⁷ C. C. R., 1313-1318, p. 392; Calthorpe's MS., vol. xx, fo. 255; printed by Schanz, vol. ii, p. 588, no. 135.

⁸ C. C. R., 1318-1323, pp. 186-7, 250.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1323-1327, p. 9. ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 378; C. P. R., 1321-1324, p. 402.



MAP SHOWING STAPLE PLACES IN THE LOW COUNTRIES.

on its renewal in 1325, Edward granted that the Staple of wool should be set up in Bruges.¹ This city enjoyed the long desired privilege for only one year, as on May 24, 1326, the foreign Staple was abolished, and it was ordained by the king and council that staples should be held at certain places within the realm.² The towns chosen were not new staple places. In the year 1291 Edward I had provided for holding staples in various towns in England, Ireland and Wales,³ and the same places were selected by Edward II. They were: Newcastle-upon-Tyne, York, Lincoln, Norwich, London, Winchester, Exeter and Bristol, for England; Dublin, Drogheda and Cork, for Ireland; Shrewsbury, Carmarthen and Cardiff for Wales; Lostwithiel and Truro for Cornwall; and Ashburton, for Devon.⁴

For a period of twelve years following 1326, there was no Staple across the Channel. If the Staple had already proved a burden while it was outside the realm,⁵ no less when there were only the home staples, was the institution looked upon as injurious to commercial interests; and although one of the first acts of Edward III was, on May 1, 1327, to confirm the staples in the places where they had been established by his father,⁶ yet in the following September, at the request of the merchants, he allowed them to trade freely until after Christmas.⁷ It can be clearly seen, however, that this was not granted for the benefit of the merchants, but was merely a financial expedient, as the merchants agreed to pay increased duties on all the wool, fells and hides exported, as a loan for the Scotch war.

This grant was followed in 1328 by the abolition of all staples

¹ C. C. R., 1323-1327, p. 378.

² *Ibid.*, p. 565.

³ Hist. MSS. Com., 14th Report, App., pt. viii, p. 6, *MSS. of the Corporation of Lincoln*.

⁴ C. P. R., 1327-1330, pp. 98-9.

⁵ In the ordinance abolishing the foreign Staple it was stated that it was "for the advantage and easement of the people," C. C. R., 1323-1327, p. 565.

⁶ C. P. R., 1327-1330, pp. 98-9.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

"ordained by kings in times past,"¹ and all merchants were allowed to go and come into England "after the Tenor of the Great Charter." For four years the merchants enjoyed this privilege, and then in 1332, the staples were once more set up within the realm.² The ordinance by which they were re-established gives such careful directions for the manner in which the merchandise was to be exported and the customs collected, that it cannot fail to be apparent what was the real object of forcing the merchants to attend them.

For two years, from 1332 to 1334, the staples flourished, and then at the request of the nobles and commons, parliament again granted that they should cease throughout the realm.³ It is impossible to say when they were re-established, but they were in existence again in 1337.⁴ Thus there had been eight changes with regard to the staple in twelve years. This lack of settled policy could not have failed to be disastrous to trade. But the regulation of commerce was a royal prerogative, which was above the rights of the people and the acts of parliament; and it was regulated merely with a view to filling the treasury.

In the meantime the countries across the channel had suffered from loss of the trade which came to them with the possession of the English Staple, and Edward made their desire to regain it serve his political ends.

The struggle with Philip of Valois for the French crown began in 1336. Louis de Nevers, count of Flanders, took active means of showing his adherence to the French cause by arresting all the English merchants in Flanders and confiscating their goods.⁵ Edward retaliated by prohibiting, on August 12, the exportation of wool and leather,⁶ and on Octo-

¹ S. R., 2 Edw. III, c. 9.

² C. P. R., 1330-1334, p. 362.

³ Rot. Parl., vol. ii, p. 377; C. C. R., 1333-1337, p. 223; Rymer, *Foedera*, R. ed., II, ii, 879.

⁴ Rymer, *Foedera*, II, iii, 169.

⁵ Varenbergh, p. 309; C. C. R., 1333-1337, p. 713.

⁶ Rymer, *Foedera*, R. ed., II, ii, 943.

ber 5, by arresting all Flemish merchants and merchandise in England.¹ This pressure brought to bear on the commerce of Flanders did not bring about the abandonment of Philip by the count as Edward hoped, but it weighed heavily on the cloth industry not only of Flanders but of all the Low Countries as well. Brabant, the industrial rival of Flanders, at once asked that a Staple of wool might be established in one of the cities of that duchy; but the king of England, not willing to widen the breach with Flanders by conferring favors on Brabant, temporized by declaring that he could not grant the request until he was assured that there would be free access to English merchants going to Brabant.² Although in February, 1337, he sent an ambassador to treat with the communalty of Brussels, Louvain and Malines concerning the establishment of the Staple in Brabant,³ yet nothing came of it; and two months later he sent the bishop of Lincoln, the earl of Salisbury and the earl of Huntingdon, with three colleagues, to treat with the count of Flanders and the cities of Ghent, Bruges and Ypres concerning the liberties which would be granted if the Staple were erected in Flanders.⁴ But the count was not to be drawn away from his adherence to Philip, and Edward abandoned his advances until early in October, when he sent another and much larger deputation on the same fruitless errand.⁵

In order to relieve the situation in Brabant a license had, on May 24, 1337, been granted to the citizens of Louvain, Brussels, Antwerp and fifteen other towns, to buy wool in England.⁶ But to insure that none of it should be taken into Flanders, the merchants were to find out how much would be used by the workmen in each city, and to take back only the amount sworn to as being needed, while none of it was to be taken into any other land than Brabant.

¹ Rymer, *Foedera*, II, iii, 152.

² *Ibid.*, 155.

³ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 165; C. P. R., 1334-1338, p. 428.

⁵ Rymer, *Foedera*, II, iii, 190.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 169.

Edward III's attempt to win the communes of Flanders, if not the count himself, by means of the Staple had not succeeded; but soon after this, through the influence of Jacques d'Artevelde, freedom of trade was established with the *bonnes villes*; and they were granted by the treaty of June 10, 1338, permission to buy English wool in the neighboring markets of Holland and Zealand, and to trade in the English ports.¹

Such was the situation when the parliament of 1338 granted Edward a subsidy of 20,000 sacks of wool, and it became necessary for him to have a market for it. A Staple was consequently established in Brabant at Antwerp, to remain there during the king's pleasure.² In November, 1338, Edward again renewed his efforts to win the alliance of Louis de Nevers and the Flemish communes, and empowered the count of Guelders to treat with them about locating the Staple in Flanders.³ This same year, in a manifesto which the count of Guelders published in Edward's name, when the latter assumed his office of Vicar of the Empire, he declared it his intention, if he succeeded in winning the crown of France, to fix the Staple of wool in Flanders.⁴ The communes could not then be won from their allegiance to the king of France; but in 1340, after the king of England had publicly assumed the title and the arms of France, the situation was changed, and on the assumption that his claim to the French crown was legal, their allegiance was due to him. Among the privileges which he bestowed upon Flanders was the grant of the Staple of wool for fifteen years to the city of Bruges, and its establishment forever in the territory of either Flanders or Brabant.⁵

¹ Varenbergh, pp. 315 ff; Rymer, *Foedera*, II, iv, 23-4.

² C. P. R., 1338-1340, p. 189.

³ Rymer, *Foedera*, II, iv, 37; C. P. R., 1338-1340, p. 193.

⁴ *Notification to Flanders of King Edward's Appointment as Vicar of the Empire*; *Archives de la ville d'Ypres*, printed by Varenbergh, p. 327.

⁵ Varenbergh, pp. 333-6; C. P. R., 1338-1340, p. 512 ff.

On the eighth of August, 1341, this grant was confirmed by a charter.¹

The Flemings, who now saw their industrial prosperity returning, took advantage of the situation and attempted to keep down the price of wool by confining the sale of it to their own merchants. Foreign merchants were prohibited from taking away wool bought at the Staple; the small towns in Flanders which had formerly used large quantities of wool were prohibited from making cloth, while the Brabant merchants were obliged to give security that all the wool which they bought would be worked up in Brabant, and even to specify in what cities it was to be used.² These restrictions were very injurious not only to the English merchants, but also to the realm, as many merchants would not go to the Staple with their merchandise, and there was consequently great loss in the customs. There were continued complaints, yet the king made but feeble effort to remedy the trouble. He sent deputies and letters to the communes, which promised for the future that equality of treatment agreed upon in a previous treaty.³ But the king acted with sufficient energy in his treatment of the merchants. Notwithstanding the loss which would accrue to them, the Staple remained at Bruges, and orders were issued throughout the realm that all wool, etc., exported should be taken to the Staple, and not elsewhere, under penalty of confiscation.⁴

After the capture of Calais in 1347, several reasons were obvious why this would be a favorable location for the continental English Staple. A permanent native population was necessary to make the town thoroughly English. The merchants, together with the large number of servants attached to

¹ Appendix, pp. 62-5; C. P. R., 1340-1343, p. 277; Varenbergh, p. 349.

² Rot. Parl., vol. ii, pp. 143a, 165b; C. C. R., 1343-1346, p. 428.

³ C. C. R., 1343-1346, p. 428; C. P. R., 1343-1345, p. 277. *Edward III aux bourgmestres, échevins et conseillers de Bruges* (1345), printed by Varenbergh, p. 443; Rot. Parl., vol. ii, pp. 165b, 202a; Rymer, *Foedera*, III, i, 29.

⁴ C. C. R., 1343-1346, p. 555.

the Staple would help in a large measure to accomplish this end; and the prosperity of the place would be materially increased by the large amount of foreign trade which would follow the Staple. The staple trade, on the other hand, would not be so subject to the fluctuations arising from disturbed international relations, and this would, in its turn, insure a steadier flow of customs duties into the treasury. Accordingly, Edward III at once removed from Bruges the Staple for tin, lead, feathers and woolen cloth, and established it at Calais for seven years.¹ The Staple for wool, wool-fells and leather, however, was allowed to remain at Bruges. An attempt was made by some of the inhabitants of Calais to hold a Staple of these goods also, but it proved so injurious that it was soon given up.² The English Staple for wool, wool-fells and leather remained at Bruges until 1353,³ when it was entirely abolished on the continent and established in a number of towns in England, Ireland and Wales.⁴ The Staple at Calais seems still to have been held for all of its merchandise except perhaps lead, which was included with the wool, wool-fells and leather sold at the domestic staple places.

There was no English wool Staple on the continent for ten years (1353-1363), and then it was set up in Calais⁵ on March 1, 1363. In 1365 the Commons asked that it might be set up in England once more for the benefit of the people.⁶ The merchants do not appear as petitioners with the commons. They perhaps found Calais at this time a better location for their wool market than the English towns, and so were unwilling to leave there. This may explain why, although the king granted the petition of the Commons, and even appointed the towns where the staples should be

¹ Rymer, *Foedera*, III, i, 32.

² *Ibid.*, R. ed., III, i, 178.

³ S. R., 27 Edw. III, st. 2, Preamble, and c. 1. Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, vol. i, p. 278 (Rolls Series); Grafton's *Chronicle*, vol. i, p. 387

⁴ S. R., 27 Edw. III, st. 2, c. 1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 43 Edw. III, Preamble.

⁶ Rot. Parl., vol. ii, p. 287b.

held, yet there is no indication that the ordinance was ever carried out. But in 1369 the peace between England and France came to an end, and the danger by sea was so great that the merchants themselves now requested that the Staple at Calais be abolished, and the staples in England be established.¹ The danger of loss in transportation was merely shifted from the staple merchants to the foreign merchants. It is difficult to see what financial benefit the Staplers reaped from the change since the exporters no doubt offset the risk of loss by sea by paying less for their wool than the Calais price.

There was no English Staple on the continent until a peace was arranged, and then, probably in 1373, it was once more fixed at Calais.²

Notwithstanding the constant interruption to trade caused by the war with France, the Staple now remained at Calais from 1373 to 1383. But the foreign merchants did not frequent the Staple as formerly; they were in danger of having their wool captured when they took it away by water, and there was little or no security for the staple merchants in Calais. The consequent loss in trade was so great, that in 1383 parliament agreed that unless a truce could be arranged with France, the Staple should be held in England.³ But instead of being brought back across the channel it was removed to Middleburgh in Zealand,⁴ where it remained until 1388,⁵ when it was returned to Calais. In 1390 the merchants again asked that it might be transferred to England.⁶ But it was not until they granted the king a subsidy that they finally obtained their request, and in January, 1391, it was once

¹ Rot. Parl., vol. ii, p. 301b; Stow's *Annals*, p. 268.

² Rot. Parl., vol. ii, p. 318a.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. iii, p. 159.

⁴ C. P. R., 1381-1385, p. 397.

⁵ S. R., 12 Rich. II, c. 16; Rymer, *Foedera*, III, iv, 32; *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden*, vol. ix, p. 90 (Rolls Series).

⁶ Rot. Parl., vol. iii, p. 268b.

more established in the home staple towns.¹ But although it had been promised that it should remain forever in England, the following June (1392) saw its return to Calais.² In 1403³ and again in 1404⁴ the merchants desired its removal because of expected war; and in 1421 parliament gave the king permission to remove it to any place he chose for three years.⁵ But notwithstanding these indications of the popular desire to hold the Staple in England only, no change was made in its location, and it remained in Calais without interruption until the loss of the town in 1558. It was then transferred to Middleburg, where it remained at least during that year and the following.⁶ The charter granted to the merchants in 1651, reserved to the English Sovereign power to appoint the staple at Middleburg, Bruges, Bergen-op-Zoom, or elsewhere, on nine months warning to the company.⁷ In 1565 the question was agitated whether it should be removed to Emden or to England,⁸ and six years later negotiations were under way with the king of France, touching its establishment in one of his cities, preferably Rouen, Dieppe or Rochelle.⁹ But there was a good deal of opposition to putting into the power of the French such a source of wealth as the Staple was, even its period of decline, and the English merchants trading in France did not care to be limited to a staple town.¹⁰ In 1580 objections were made by the Staplers to its removal to the Brill in Holland;¹¹ Zealand as well as Holland coveted the market for English wool, and asked to

¹ S. R., 14 Rich. II, Preamble, and c. i; Rot. Parl., vol. iii, pp. 278a, 279a; *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden*, vol. ix, p. 243 (Rolls Series).

² Rot. Parl., vol. iii, p. 285a.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 529b.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 554a.

⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. iv, p. 130a.

⁶ *MSS. of the Marquis of Salisbury*, pt. 1, p. 169. Calendared in the Hist. MSS. Com. Reports.

⁷ Charter of 1561, Appendix, p. 70.

⁸ C. S. P., Dom. 1547-1580, p. 258.

⁹ *Ibid.*, For., 1572-1574, pp. 22, 33.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Dom., 1547-1580, p. 468.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 694.

have the Company of the Staple go there with their merchandise,¹ but apparently without success.

There was in the meantime much consideration of the advantage which would follow its removal into England;² and when, in 1617, James I confirmed the charter granted by Elizabeth in 1561, the Staple was fixed in various cities and towns in the realm.³ It was not now confined to those towns in which it had been located when it was in the realm before, but many new ones were added. The places where it was established in England were: London and its suburbs, Canterbury, Exeter, Norwich, Worcester, Lincoln, Winchester, Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Northampton, Brackley, Reading, Cirencester, Kendal, Sherborne, Devizes, Taunton Deane, Ratsdale [Rochdale?], Richmond, Wakefield, Halifax, Coggeshall, and Woodstock.⁴ For Ireland the places chosen were: Dublin, Waterford, Cork, Drogheda, Limerick, Galway, Carrickfergus, and Londonderry.⁵ When, in the same year, the sale of wool was prohibited in all towns except those where a staple of wool was held, petitions were received from many places asking to be erected into staple towns;⁶ among these were Leicester, Leeds, Chipping Campden and Tetbury.⁷ As most of the wool was now worked up in England the staple places were no longer confined to towns on or near the coast, but were located where they would be accessible both to the wool-growers and to the clothiers. With the constant decrease in the export of wool the activity of both the local organizations and the Company of the Staple must have declined, but their legal existence was not effected. The seat of govern-

¹ A. P. C., 1586-1587, p. 206. ² C. S. P., Dom., 1581-1590, pp. 59, 60.

³ *Charter of 1617*, Appendix, p. 75.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ C. S. P., Carew, 1603-1624, p. 329, no. 171.

⁶ *Records of the Borough of Nottingham*, vol. iv, p. 355, note 2.

⁷ C. S. P., Dom., 1611-1618, p. 467, no. 28.

ment of the Company was fixed at Ledden Hall, London, by the Charter of 1617.¹ The towns where the staple merchants held local staples had their staple privileges by royal patents;² and these towns, in some cases at least, continued to exercise their rights as late as the first part of the nineteenth century.³

This study of the location of the staple shows that out of a period of more than three hundred years, there had been but seven years when there was no Staple for English merchandise either on the continent or in the realm, and only twenty years when there was not an English Staple on the continent. The continental situation was very evidently the one that was most advantageous, except in periods of foreign war. There was, to be sure, great want of stability in its location. For example, it was changed fifteen times between 1326, when it was first abolished on the continent, and 1391, when it was permanently settled at Calais. The same fact can also be seen, but in a somewhat less degree, in the selection of the places where it was located within the realm, when it was abolished on the continent.

The list of the places chosen by Edward II when he located the Staple in England in 1326 has already been given,⁴ and the same towns were confirmed as staple places in 1327 by Edward III,⁵ who mentioned the last three towns, Lostwithiel, Truro and Ashburton, as special staples for tin. In the Statute of the Staple of 1353,⁶ only Carmarthen was retained for the staple in Wales, but Waterford was added for Ireland; in England, London was dropped, but Westminster, Canterbury⁷ and Chichester were added. As some of the towns where there was a staple were located inland, the statute provided that there should be a specified port for

¹ *Charter of 1617*, Appendix, p. 77.

² C. S. P., Dom., 1611-1618, p. 467, no. 28.

³ Gross, *Gild Merchant*, vol. i, p. 147.

⁴ Chapter iv, p. 43.

⁵ C. P. R., 1327-1330, p. 98.

⁶ S. R., 27 Edw. III, st. 2, c. 1.

⁷ A staple was granted to Canterbury in honor of St. Thomas à Becket, Rot. Parl., vol. ii, p. 253.

each one, to which the staple merchandise should be taken for export. These ports were Hull for York; St. Botolph [Boston] for Lincoln; Great Yarmouth, for Norwich; London, for Westminster; Sandwich, for Canterbury; and Southampton for Winchester.¹ The year 1369 saw the English continental Staple abolished for the third time. In the list of home towns where it was placed, the ports of Kingston-upon-Hull, St. Botolph, Yarmouth and Queensborough, from which wool had been allowed to be exported, were substituted for the inland staple towns of York, Lincoln, Norwich and Canterbury. The staple at Carmarthen was not mentioned.² In November, 1390, the staples were re-established in the places named in the Statute of the Staple.³

If these changes are studied in connection with the lists of shipping-places for staple merchandise, the tendency to bring the collection of customs into close relation with either the great organization of the Company of the Merchants of the Staple, or the local organizations of the merchants in the home staples will be seen. In 1333 it was ordained that customs were to be collected only at the staples.⁴ Of the eighteen ports where the customs were collected in 1341,⁵ when the English staple was in Bruges, six had been the seat of the Staple when it was in England;⁶ by 1377, four more had local home staples;⁷ and in 1445, one other, Southampton was granted a patent which gave it staple rights and a local organization.⁸

¹ S. R., 27 Edw. III, st. 2, c. 1.

² *Ibid.*, 43 Edw. III, c. 1.

³ *Ibid.*, 14 Rich. II, c. 1.

⁴ C. C. R., 1333-1337, pp. 58-9.

⁵ These ports were London, Chichester, Sandwich, Southampton, Bristol, Melcombe, Weymouth, Exeter, Newcastle, Hertlipole, York, Kingston-upon-Hull, Boston, Lynn, Great Yarmouth, Ipswich, Carmarthen and Chepstowe. C. C. R., 1341-1343, p. 190.

⁶ London, York, Exeter, Bristol, Newcastle and Carmarthen.

⁷ Southampton, Weymouth, Hertlipole and Chepstowe.

⁸ Hist. MSS. Com., 11th Report, App., part iii, p. 45, *Southampton MSS.* After the year 1377 Southampton was always mentioned as the special shipping

The century and a half during which the Staple was located uninterruptedly in Calais was the period during which the government found it most useful as an administrative organ. But the decline of the Company of the Staple had already set in long before this period was past. There were several causes for this, but chief among them was the growth of the home manufacture of woollen cloth, which made it necessary to restrict the export of wool.¹ The continental wars were also disastrous to the Staplers. Their merchandise was in danger of being captured in crossing the channel, and when taken to the Staple it brought ruinously low prices. The foreign merchants did not frequent the Staple as formerly, and those who did attend took advantage of the necessity of the Staplers, and would not buy except at their own price. The amount of wool bought annually by the French alone had fallen in 1527 from 2000 to 400 sacks.² Among their causes of distress the merchants of the Staple also mention that the Spanish wool had so improved in quality that it competed with the fine English wool, and could be sold in the Netherlands at a lower price than they could afford at the Staple of Calais; for the Staplers were obliged to keep up the price in order to meet their fixed annual payments to the government.³ For these various reasons the shipments to the Staple fell away in the years 1520 to 1527, so that the merchants could not meet their obligation by £23,000, while they placed the loss sustained by the whole body of Staplers at £100,000.⁴ There is no doubt much exaggeration in this picture of their

place for the merchants of Lombardy and Catalonia. Doubtless similar staple privileges were granted to Berwick, which, together with Newcastle-upon-Tyne, had the monopoly of shipping all the wool grown in the north of England and in Scotland.

¹ S. R., 3 Edw. IV, c. 1.

² Brit. Mus., Cotton. MSS., Tiberius D., VIII, fo. 16, *A Petition of the Staplers to the Council, circa 1527*, printed by Schanz, vol. ii, no. 129, p. 565 ff.

³ Chapter i, p. 19.

⁴ *Petition of the Staplers*, printed by Schanz, vol. ii, no. 129, p. 565 ff.

condition, as at that time they wanted to be released from their annual payments; we know that in 1525 they loaned the king £6,500.¹ But nevertheless the fact that they occupied fewer wool-houses than formerly,² the risks they were willing to undergo lest their wool should remain unsold in the Staple,³ as well as the increasing number of petitions for some remedy for their condition, all show that they had passed the zenith of their prosperity by the early part of the sixteenth century.

In 1617, when the Staple was for the last time abolished on the continent and re-established in England, it had reached a critical period in its very existence as an active organization. The export trade in the raw material was no longer able to support a large number of merchants; the English manufacturers of woollen cloth preferred to buy directly from the wool-growers; the Staplers were complained of as "broggers," and were said to be a distinct disadvantage to the Commonwealth in exercising their ancient right of buying and selling wool.⁴

Their only hope of continued prosperity lay in being able to share in the export of woollen cloth. Their claim to this trade involved them in a controversy which had had its origin about the middle of the fifteenth century. As the manufacture of woollen cloth in England had increased during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a new company, the Merchant Adventurers, had arisen, which soon had the same monopoly in the export of woollen cloth that the Staplers had in the export of the raw wool.⁵ Woollen cloth had been included in the list of staple articles during part of the

¹ C. S. P., For. & Dom., 1529-1530, p. 3090, no. 37.

² *Ibid.*, 1531-1532, Henry VIII, vol. v, p. 639, no. 1510.

³ *Ibid.*, 1524-1526, Henry VIII, vol. iv, pt. i, p. 675, no. 1508.

⁴ *Defence of the Mayor, Constables and Society of the Merchants of the Staple of England, State Papers, Dom., Interregnum*, vol. 25, nos. 42, 43.

⁵ Lingelbach, *Merchant Adventurers of England*.

fourteenth century.¹ The Staplers had exercised the right to export it before the date when the Merchant Adventurers became a chartered company.² A conflict broke out between the two companies when the Merchant Adventurers attempted to impose the entrance fee of their Fellowship upon all Staplers who exported cloth to the Low Countries. The trouble began in the reign of Henry VI. On being appealed to by the Staplers the king declared that the charter which had been granted to the Merchant Adventurers by Henry IV, was not to be so construed as to injure the Staplers in their persons or goods.³ Henry VII and Henry VIII⁴ both supported the claims of the Staplers, who based their right on the antiquity of their Company, and its priority in engaging in the cloth trade. But the Merchant Adventurers refused to accept the decision, and caused some of the Staplers to be arrested and thrown into prison.⁵ However this affair may have been settled, the controversy broke out again in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, about the year 1570.⁶ Whereas the advantage so far had been decidedly with the Staplers, from this time on there was a change in the attitude of the Council. The Merchant Adventurers became still more hostile to the Staplers, and were opposed even to admitting them into their Fellowship.⁷ In 1582 a suit was begun between the two companies⁸ the outcome of which can be conjectured, as in the following year the Staplers were pro-

¹ Rymer, *Feodera*, III, i, 32; iii, 47.

² *Merchant Adv.*, p. 6.

³ *Grant of Privilege by Henry VI to the Staplers*, printed by Schanz, vol. ii, no. 116, p. 539 ff.

⁴ *Inseximus of Star Chamber Decree of H. VII*, printed by Schanz, vol. ii, no. 119, p. 547 ff; *Interpretation of same by Henry VIII*, *ibid.*, no. 120, p. 548; no. 123, p. 556.

⁵ *Complaint of the Staplers; R. O. Star Chamber Proceedings*, H. VIII, vol. ix, p. 26, printed by Schanz, vol. ii, no. 127, p. 563.

⁶ C. S. P., Dom., 1547-1580, p. 405, no. 102.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 698, no. 76. ⁸ *Ibid.*, 1581-1590, pp. 59-60, nos. 22, 32.

hibited from exporting woolen cloth.¹ The Merchant Adventurers petitioned for a trial before the Council;² the Staplers put in a counter petition to have the cause tried at common law,³ but later acceded to the demand of the Adventurers.⁴ The Staplers evidently lost their suit, as an attempt was made in 1621 to have their trade restored to them by law.⁵ This failed, and the long controversy was finally ended in 1634, when a petition from the Staplers against a new order in council in favor of the Merchant Adventurers, that they should have the sole trade in cloth in the Low Countries,⁶ led the Attorney General to examine all the charters and patents of the two Companies. He reported that the exportation of any manufactures of wool had never been a right possessed by the Company of the Staple by virtue of any of their patents, but that it was vested solely in the Merchant Adventurers.⁷ Thus cut off from all hope of sharing in the growing trade of the rival Company, the Staplers were limited to the export of wool, fells and leather. But the clothiers needed the wool at home. As the cloth trade brought in large revenues to the royal treasury, the export of wool and fells was frequently interrupted. In 1626,⁸ 1630,⁹ 1632¹⁰ and 1660¹¹ laws were passed prohibiting any wool to be exported. This last act was not repealed until early in the nineteenth century and it was a blow to the Company of the Staple from which it never recovered. After this it ceased to play any part in the economic welfare of England, although it still retains its form as a chartered Company.

¹ C. S. P., Dom., 1581-1590, p. 114, no. 26.

² *Ibid.*, no. 25.

³ *Ibid.*, no. 27.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 131, no. 75.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1619-1623, p. 250, no. 113. Cf. Hist. MSS. Com., 3^d Report, App., p. 25; *Calendar of the House of Lords MSS.* The bill was introduced in the House of Lords, and was committed on Dec. 6, 1621. There were no further proceedings in the matter.

⁶ C. S. P., Dom., 1634-1635, p. 218, no. 51.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 257, no. 59.

⁸ Rymer, *Foedera*, VIII, ii, 125.

⁹ *Ibid.*, VIII, iii, 96.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 245.

¹¹ S. R., 12 Ch. II, c. 32, sec. 1.

APPENDIX.

DE STAPULA TENENDA IN CERTO LOCO ORDINATIO, ANNO 13, EDWARDI SECUNDI.

Rex collectoribus custumae lanarum & pellium lanutarum in portu London salutem. Cùm nos vicesimo die Maii anno regni nostri sexto attendentes damna & gravamina, quae mercatoribus de regno nostro diversimodè evenerunt, ex eo quod mercatores tam indigenae quàm alienigenae lanas & pelles lanutas infrà regnum & potestatem nostram ementes, & se cum eisdem lanis & pellibus ad vendendum eas ad diversa loca infrà terras Brabantiae, Flandriae, & de Artoys eorum libito voluntatis transtulerint: & volentes etiam hujusmodi damnis & gravaminibus quatenus bono modo possemus providere, de consilio nostro ordinaverimus, quod mercatores indigenae & alienigenae lanas & pelles hujusmodi infrà regnum & potestatem praedictam ementes, & ad terras praedictas ibidem vendendas ducere volentes, lanas illas & pelles ad certam stapulam infrà aliquam earundem terrarum, per Majorem & Communitatem eorundem mercatorum, de regno nostro ordinandam assignari, ac prout & quando expedire viderint mutandum, & non ad alia loca in terris illis ducant, seu duci faciant ullo modo: & inter caetera concesserimus mercatoribus de regno nostro supradicto pro nobis & haeredibus nostris, quòd ipsi Major & consilium dictorum mercatorum, qui pro tempore fuerint, quibuscunque mercatoribus indigenis seu alienigenis, qui contra dictam ordinationem venerint, & modo rationabili convicti fuerint, certas pecuniae summas pro delictis illis imponant, & quod illae hujusmodi summae de bonis & mercimoniis mercatorum sic delinquentium, ubicunque ea infrà regnum & potestatem praedictam inveniri contigerit, per ministros nostros ad opus nostrum leventur: prout in Charta nostra inde confecta plenius continentur: quam quidem Chartam per singulos comitatus regni nostri super costeras

Major & Com-
munitas sta-
pulae.

Charta anno
regni sexto
confecta.

maris fecimus publicari, & firmiter inhiberi, ne qui mercatores indigenae seu alienigenae contra tenorem Chartae praedictae sub poenis contentis in eadem venerint ullo modo: Ac postmodum dato nobis intelligi, quod quàmplures mercatores tam indigenae quàm alienigenae, lanas & pelles lanutas infrà regnum & potestatem praedictas ementes, & se cum eisdem lanis & pellibus ad vendendum eas ad alia loca in dictis terris, quàm ad Stapulam juxta concessionem nostram praedictam per Majorem & communitatem dictorum mercatorum dē regno nostro in aliqua terrarum illarum ordinatam & assignatam transtulerint in nostri contemptum, & contra Chartam ordinationis, publicationis & inhibitionis praedictarum assignaverimus quosdam fideles nostros in diversis partibus regni ad inquirendum de lanis & pellibus lanutis ad dictas terras alibi quàm ad Stapulam illam ductis, ita quod emendae inde ad nos pertinentes, ad opus nostrum leventur; etiam intellexerimus, quod quasi omnes mercatores tam indigenae quàm alienigenae hujusmodi mercimonia in dicto regno nostro exercentes sunt culpabiles de praemissis: & quod plures inde indictati, ac alii timentes inde indictari, lanas suas ac pelles lanutas sub nominibus aliorum non culpabilium faciunt advocari, & extra regnum nostrum transmitti quibusdam alienigenis, sic culpabilibus in dictum regnum forsitan non reversuris, ut sic forisfacturas praedictas effugiant, & nos de emenda ad nos sic pertinente illudant: quae si permitterentur sic transire in nostri damnum non modicum redundarent. Nos volentes hujusmodi fraudibus obviare, & nostris damnis quatenus bono modo poterimus praecavere, vobis praecipimus firmiter injungentes, quod à singulis mercatoribus lanas seu pelles lanutas per portum praedictum ad partes externas ducere volentibus corporale sacramentum ad sancta Dei Evangelia recipiatis, quod ipsi lanas seu pelles lanutas sub nomine ipsius, cujus propriae sunt, & non alterius advocabunt. & tunc recepta ab illo cujus lanae & pelles hujusmodi erunt, vel nomine suo sufficiente securitate pro qua respondere volueritis, de respondendo & faciendo nobis id quod ad nos pertinet de lanis & pellibus lanutis per ipsum ductis seu missis ad aliquam dictarum terrarum Flandriae & Brabantiae, & de Artoys contra formam Chartae, proclamationis, & inhibitionis supradictarum, si ipsum super hoc convinci contingat, lanas & pelles illas lanutas extra portum praedictum, recepta prius custuma debita de eisdem, ad partes externas transire permittatis. Teste Rege apud Doveram decimo octavo die Junii, per ipsum Regem & Consilium.

Et postmodum per breve de privato sigillo eodem modo mandatum est collectoribus custumae praedictae in portubus subscriptis: Videlicet,

- In portu villae Southampton.
- In portu villae Weymouth.
- In portu villae Sancti Botolphi.
- In portu villae de Kingstone super Hull.
- In portu villae de novo Castro.
- In portu villae de magna Iernemutha.
- In portu villae de Lenne.
- In portu villae de Gypwico.

Printed in Hakluyt, *Voyages*, vol. i, p. 352, ed. 1903-1905, Glasgow.

BREVE DOMINI REGIS DE STAPULÂ LANARUM.

Edw. Dei Gratia, etc.

Sciatis quod cum ante hec tempora dampna et gravamina diversa mercatoribus de regno nostro, non sine dampno progenitorum nostrorum quondam regum Anglie et nostro avenerint multis modis, ex eo quod mercatores, tam indigene quam alienigene lanas et pellas lanutas infra regnum praedictum et potestatem nostram ementes et secum eisdem lanis et pellibus, ad vendendum eas ad diversa loca infra terras Brabancie, Flandrie et de Artoys, pro eorum libito transtulerent: nos volentes hujusmodi dampnis et gravaminibus obviare et nostro ac mercatorum nostrorum de regno predicto, commodis quatenus bono modo poterimus providere, volumus et de consilio nostro ordinavimus perpetuo durand., quod mercatores indigene et alienigene lanas et pellas hujusmodi infra regnum et potestatem praedictam ementes et ad terras praedictas ibidem vendendas ducere volentes, lanas illas et pellas ad certam stapulam infra aliquem eorundem terrarum, per majorem et communitatem dictorum mercatorum de regno nostro ordinandam et assignandam, ac prout et quando expedire viderint mutandam et non ad alia loca in terris illis ducant seu duci faciant ullo modo; concedentes dictis majori et mercatoribus de regno nostro supradicto, pro nobis et heredibus nostris, quod ipsi major et consilium eorundem mercatorum, qui pro tempore fuerint quibuscumque mercatoribus tam indigenis quam alienigenis qu contra dictam ordinationem venerint et inde per predictos majorem et consilium dictorum mercatorum rationabiliter

convincti fuerint, certas pecunie summas pro dilictis illis imponant, et quod ille hujusmodi pecunie summe de quibus nos aut ministri nostri per predictum majorem fuerimus informati, de bonis et mercimoniis mercatorum sic delinquentium, ubicumque ea infra regnum et potestatem praedictam inveniri contigerit, per ministros nostros juxta informationem praedictam et taxationem inde per ipsum majorem faciendam, ad opus nostrum leventur salvo semper dictis majori et mercatoribus, quod ipsi mercatores delinquentes, si eorum bona et mercimonia in stapula predicta extra regnum et potestatem nostram predictam contigent inveniri, inter se rationabiliter castigare valeant et punire, sine occasione vel impedimento mortis vel heredum nostrorum seu ministrorum nostrorum quorumcunque sicut hactenus facere consueverunt. In cujus rei testimonium has litteras nostras fieri facimus patentes. Teste me ipso apud Cantuar. vicesim. die maii, anno regni nostri sexto (1312).

Cfr. Delpit, Documents français. Printed in Varenbergh, Relations Diplomatiques entre le Comté de Flandre et l'Angleterre, p. 440-1.

DE STAPULA, APUD BRUGES IN FLANDRIA, TENENDA.

REX, OMNIBUS, ad quos, &c. Salutem.

Sciatis quòd,

Cùm nonnulli, Mercatores & alii tàm Alienigenae, quàm Indigenae, quaerentes in nostro & Republicae dispendio Lucrum suum, Lanas & alias Mercandisas (non solutis Custumis & Subsidiis, nobis indè debitis) quandoque furtim & occultè, quandoque per Ministrorum nostrorum Coniventiam, extra Regnum nostrum Angliae eduxerint, & indies educere non desistunt, Ipsas quo voluerint traudentes, in nostri Damnum non modicum & Contemptum,

Nos,

Tantae volentes obviare Nequitiae, ac nostris & Fidelium nostrorum prospicere Commodis, ut debemus,

Ad instantem requisitionem, Fidelium nostrorum, Mercatorum dicti Regni nostri, de maturo Peritorum nobis assistantium Consilio, Volumus & concedimus quòd Stapula Lanarum, ac aliarum Mercandisarum, ad hujusmodi Stapulam traduci solitarum, exnunc extra dictum Regnum nostrum educendarum, apud Villam de Brugges in Flandriâ teneatur, juxta Conventiones inter nos ac, dilectos & fideles nostros, Homines de Flandriâ super hoc initas duratura,

Ann. D. 1341,
An. 15, E.
III, pat. 15,
E. III, p. 2,
m. 15.

Et quòd per Majorem & Constabularios, jam per nos deputandos, & cum ipsi Mortui, vel ritè per Mercatores dicti Regni nostri Amoti fuerint, per alios Idoneos, per Mercatores ejusdem Regni nostri Angliae eligendos, dirigatur; ad quas Amotionem, ex causâ rationabili, cum expedire viderint, & Electionem faciendas, plenam eis concedimus Potestatem.

Volentes quòd per dictos, Majorem & Constabularios, fiant, sine omni Acceptatione Personarum, Punctiones super Transgressionibus & Delictis, in dictâ Stapulâ perpetratis, & omnia alia prout in hujusmodi Stapulâ aliàs fieri consuevit; & nos eos in hiis, quae sic ritè fecerint, fovere volumus & tueri.

Quibus etiam, Majori & Constabulariis, ac Mercatoribus & aliis, ad dictam Stapulam venientibus, omnes Libertates & Consuetudines rationabiles, quas in hujusmodi Stapulâ habere consueverant, quatenus ad nos attinet, confirmamus,

Adicientes & concedentes quòd omnes Homines, Majores, & Minores, Alienigenae & Indigenae, cujuscumque statûs vel conditionis extiterint, Lanas ac Merces alias, ad Stapulam adduci solitas, volentes extra dictum Regnum nostrum educere, illas ad dictam Stapulam transmittere, & Collectoribus Custumatorum nostrarum, in Portubus, ubi dictas Lanas & Mercandisas carcari contigerit, jurare Securitatem facere teneantur, quòd ipsas ad dictam Stapulam, & non alibi, traducent, ibidem, juxta modum Stapulae, venditioni exponendas.

Et super hoc, ac super Custumâ debitâ, pro dictis Lanis & Mercandisis solutâ, fiant Indenturae inter dictos Collectores & Ductores Lanarum & Mercandisarum praedictarum; quarum pars altera Sigillo nostro (quod dicitur Coket) & altera Sigillo dictorum Ductorum consignentur;

Ita quòd dicti Collectores partem Indenturae, penes eos sub Sigillo dictorum Ductorum remanentem, habeant ad Scaccarium nostrum, cùm Compotum suum reddiderint; & praefati Ductores alteram partem, Sigillo nostro signatam, ut dicitur, praefatis Majori & Constabulariis, statim cum applicuerint, ostendant & liberent; quam iidem, Major & Constabularii, ad dictum Scaccarium, ad onerandum ibidem dictos Collectores, mittere teneantur.

Et, ut haec Ordinatio nostra, metu poenae, meliùs observetur, statuimus & concedimus quòd omnes Lanae & Mercandisae prae-

dictae, quas extra Portus dicti Regni nostri, non Custumatas, nec Cokettatas, educi contigerit; ac etiam Naves, dictas Lanas & Mercandisas portantes, nobis ipso facto Forisfactae sint & Confiscatae.

Et, si dicti, Major & Constabularii, dictas Lanas & Mercandisas, sic sine Custumâ vel Coketto eductas, inveniant, habeant pro Scrutinio suo Unam, & nos aliam Medietatem Lanarum & Mercandisarum praedictarum; forisfacturâ Navium, quae propter hoc, ut praedicitur, incident in commissum, nobis specialiter reservatâ.

Et, si aliqui Mercatores, vel alii, Lanas & Mercandisas hujusmodi, sic ritè Custumatas & Cokettatas, extra Regnum nostrum eduxerint, & illas non ad dictam Stapulam, set alibi quo voluerint, traduxerint (Tempestate vel Incursu Hostium non urgente) Sexaginta Solidos pro quolibet Sacco, & pro Pellibus & aliis Mercandisis, sic traductis, juxta ratam hujusmodi, nobis solvere teneantur; de quibus dicti, Major & Constabularii, semper, cum expedierit, Inquisitionem faciant diligentem.

Et cùm Tales infra dictam Stapulam & Districtum eorum invenerint, ipsos, donec nobis de dictâ Poenâ satisfecerint arestari faciant & teneri, aliàs, si ipsos apprehendere nequeant, de Nominibus eorum nos certificent indilatè, ut dictam Poenam de Bonis illorum, qui dictas Lanas & Mercandisas sic aliundè traduxerint, ubicumque illa infra dictum Regnum nostrum inveniri poterunt, levare faciamus.

Et, ut dicti, Major & Constabularii, ac Socii sui Mercatores, meliùs possint & liberiùs dictam Stapulam regere, & in statu debito conservare, volumus & concedimus quod, pro Factis & Commissis in dictâ Stapulâ, deducantur tantumodò secundum Legem Mercatoriam, & non secundum Comunem Legem dicti Regni nostri.

Et, quòd ab Exquisitis Occasionibus & Molestationibus indebitis per Nos & Haeredes nostros specialiter praeserventur, si quae Cartae, Munimenta, vel Pacta, prius facta, dictam Stapulam, & Libertates, ac Legem ejusdem, non autem Personas singulares, contingentia, infra dictum Regnum nostrum, vel Potestatem nostram, in quorumcumque manibus inveniri contingat, et praedictis Majori & Constabulariis, absque omni difficultate vel contradictione, volumus liberari.

Ad haec, volentes Securitati Mercatorum, & aliorum Contractuentium in dictâ Stapulâ, uberiùs providere, volumus & concedimus quòd omnes Mercatores super Contractibus, factis in dictâ

Stapulâ, ac Litteris Obligatoriiis, & aliis indè factis ibidem placitare possint infra dictum Regnum nostrum, & illuc habere Justitiam & Justitiae Executionem, ac si dicti Contractus & Litterae infra dictum Regnum nostrum initi fuissent & confectae; quacumque Lege seu Consuetudine contrariâ non obstante.

Et, ut dicta Stapula melius continuari valeat & defendi, volumus & concedimus quòd Major, Constabularii, & Mercatores, dictae Stapulae, pro Comunibus Negotiis dictae Stapulae, & Venientium ad eandem, prosequendis & defendendis, facere possint (cùm necessitas exegerit) rationabiles Impositiones, seu Tallagia, super Mercandis, ad dictam Stapulam adductis, & adducendis; ita quòd non deferatur Uni plus quàm Alteri; set quòd, juxta quantitatem Bonorum cujuslibet, Aequalitas observetur.

Proviso quòd illi, qui per dictos Majorem & Constabularios ad levandum dictas Impositiones vel Tallagia fuerint deputati, ibidem Computum indè reddere teneantur, & per redditionem dicti Computi sint exonerati: ita quòd alibi propter hoc ulteriùs non vexentur; & idem fiat de Transgressionibus ibidem perpetratis & per dictos Majorem & Constabularios punitis & reformatis (videlicet) quòd alibi non inquiratur nec concedatur ulterius de eisdem.

Item, volumus & concedimus quòd, in casu quo Mercatores dictae Stapulae Platam Argenti, pto Monteâ cudendâ, ad Cuneos nostros deferre voluerint, Cunei nostri Londoniae & Cantuariæ parati erunt & aperti ad recipiendum & cudendum dictam Platam; ita quod dicti Mercatores erunt in formâ debitâ celeriter expediti.

Volumus etiam quòd dicti, Major & Mercatores dicti Regni nostri, possint, saltem semel, vel bis in Anno, cum melius vacare poterint, in Angliam convenire ad Tractandum & Ordinandum ibidem, prout pro statu dictae Stapulae & Utilitate Communi atque suâ meliùs viderint expedire, ita tamen quod alios dimittant in dictâ Stapulâ loco sui, nè per illorum absentiam, dicta Stapula Detrimentum incurrat.

In cujus, &c,

Teste Rege apud Turrin London. octavo die Augusti.

PER IPSUM REGEM & CONCILIUM.

CHARTER GRANTED BY ELIZABETH TO THE MERCHANTS OF THE STAPLE
OF ENGLAND, MAY 30, 1561.

Patent Roll, 3 Elizabeth, part 2, membrane 27.

Pro mercatoribus stapule Anglie } Regina omnibus ad quos etc.
de concessione sibi et succes- } salutem. Cum tempore sere-
soribus. } nissimi et invictissimi domini
Edwardi tercii huius regni nostri Anglie quondam Regis progeni-
toris nostri stapula lanarum et pellium lanutarum et aliorum generum
mercium . .¹ ab inclito opido Middilburgo in partibus Zelandie usque
ad villam Calicie per prefatum Regem Edwardum tercium translata
. . fuerit ac in eadem villa Calicie sub ordine regimine et gubernatione
maioris constabulariorum et societatis mercatorum eiusdem
stapule nonnullis iam retroactis annis et temporibus remanserit . .
ac eadem stapula et eiusdem societas variis priuilegiis iurisdicionibus
libertatibus et annuitatibus per dictum Regem Edwardum tercium et
per alios progenitores nostros reges Anglie fulcita . . extitere tam per
separales eorundem quondam regum chartas et concessionem sub
magno sigillo Anglie confectas quam per diuersa actus et statuta in
diuersis parliamentis edita et prouisa Quequidem societas mercatorum
stapule et mercatores eiusdem predicta villa Calicie per regem
Francorum sorori nostri precharissime Regine Marie defuncte ac
huic regno Anglie tunc temporibus hoste dolo malo iampridem sur-
repta et capta regnale dicta Regina Maria non solum a bonis et
mercibus suis in maximum eorundem mercatorum dampnum et detri-
mentum verum eciam ab usu et exercicio mercature et mutui com-
mercii et omni negociandi genere cum alienigenis penitus sunt
exclusi et expulsi in eorundem (. .) subuersionem et internicionem
perpetuam nisi eas nostro beneficio breui subueniretur Et quia plu-
rime donaciones et concessionem tam per diuersas literas patentes
predictorum progenitorum nostrorum sub magno sigillo suo Anglie
confectas quam per diuersa actus et statuta diuersorum parliamento-
rum edita referebantur et extentebantur solum modo maiori consta-
bulariis et societati mercatorum stapule ville Calicie predicte ob
defectum igitur negociationis et commercii in eadem villa ut predi-
citur surrepta ac in Francorum potestatem deducta vigor et validitas
eorundem concessionum et status stapule et mercatorum predictorum
in questionem vocari possit Et quia dicta societas mercatorum stapule

¹ Dots indicate omissions in the text not essential to the meaning.

habita est inter cetera societati mercatorum huius regni nostri Anglie vna ex precipuis et antiquissimis et non solum singulari fide estimatione et fame apud exteros antehac dignissima et in Corone nostre Anglie et reipublice eiusdem membrum vtile et necessarium hucusque semper estimatum est ac reuenciones et prouentus eiusdem Corone custumis et subsidiis bonorum et mercerum suorum ratione proueniencium multum annexerint et promouerint Sed eciam ciuitates burgi oppida ville artifices ceteraque huius regni nostri membra cum predictis mercatoribus stapule et mercature sue genere exercitata et frequentata floruerunt in bono statu et condicione vt plurimum fuerit et extiterit. Nos igitur . . . conferre de gracia nostra speciali ac ex certa sciencia et mero motu nostris pro nobis heredibus et successoribus nostris volumus ordinamus et per has litteras nostras concedimus quod Willemus Chester miles Thomas Offley miles et Thomas Lee miles Ricardus Goodericke armiger Iohannes Mershe Edmundus Hall Willemus Bury Iohannes Bradley Cristoferus Whithed Thomas Palfreyman Thomas Dalton Ricardus Whethyll et Iohannes Hampton ac omnes et singuli alii mercatores stapule nuper nominati mercatores et societas stapule ville Calicie aut mercatores stapule apud villam Caliciam seu quocumque alio nomine vel aliis nominibus quibuscumque cuiuscumque incorporaciones [*sic*] aut corporis politici vocabantur . . . qui modo sunt aut imposterum erunt de societate mercatorum stapule predicte sint vna societas communitas et corpus incorporatum de se re et nomine habeantque successionem perpetuam perpetuis futuris temporibus duraturam ac sint et erunt in re facto et nomine vnum corpus incorporatum per se imperpetuum per nomen maioris constabulariorum et societatis mercatorum stapule Anglie ac ipsos maiorem constabularios et societatem mercatorum stapule Anglie et successores suos incorporauimus stabiliuimus et vniuimus et corpus incorporatum per idem nomen et sub eodem nomine maioris constabularionum et societatis mercatorum stapule Anglie imperpetuum duraturum realiter et ad plenum incorporamus stabilius creamus erigimus ordinamus facimus et constituimus per presentes Et quod habeant successionem imperpetuam et commune sigillum rebus et negociis suis deseruiturum. Ac volumus ac per presentes facimus ordinandus creamus et constituimus predictum Willelmum Chester militem maiorem stapule Anglie predicte ac predictos Iohannem

Mershe et Edmundum Hall constabularios dicte stapule Anglie usque ad festum Annunciacionis beate Marie Virginis proxime sequens post datam harum litterarum nostrarum patencium permanentes et continuandos aut diucius vel breuiori tempore prout predictae societati mercatorum dicte stapule Anglie vel maiori parti eorundem indebitur expedire. Et ulterius pro nobis heredibus et successoribus nostris volumus et per presentes concedimus quod dicta societas mercatorum dicte stapule Anglie de seipsis eligere possint et valeant apud ciuitatem nostram London' vel alibi vbi dicta stapula Anglie fore contigerit et mercandize eiusdem stapule vendicioni exponentur de tempore in tempus imperpetuum quociens et quando dicte societati . . aut maiori parti eiusdem ibidem existenti visum fuerat expedire vnum maiorem et duos constabularios pro gubernacione mercatorum societatis predictae stapule Anglie eisdem et consimilibus modo et forma prout predicti mercatores et societas stapule dicte ville Calicie tempore capcionis dicte ville Calicie aut infra vnum annum proximo precedentem dictum tempus capcionis eiusdem ville Calicie eligere poterant vel vsi fuerant quodque iidem maior et constabularii dicte stapule Anglie pro tempore existentes habeant eandem tantem et consimilem potestatem et auctoritatem predictos mercatores societatis stapule Anglie in omnibus et per omnia gubernandos regendos et tractandos prout maior et constabularii predictae societatis mercatorum predictae ville Calicie . . habuerunt . . racione seu pretexto aliquarum concessionum per aliquem progenitorum nostrorum quondam Regum Anglie seu alicuius statuti . . seu aliter quocumque legitimo modo. Et volumus ac per presentes . . concedimus dictis maiori constabulariis et societati mercatorum stapule Anglie predictae et successoribus suis quod ipsi et successores sui imperpetuum per nomen maioris constabulariorum et societatis mercatorum stapule Anglie sint et erunt imperpetuum vnum corpus incorporatum in lege sufficiens capax habile et idoneum ad implacitandum prosequendum respondendum et defendendum coram quibuscumque iudicibus et iusticiariis nostris heredum et successorum nostrorum tam spiritualibus quam temporalibus et aliis personis quibuscumque in omnibus curiis nostris . . in omnibus et omnimodis accionibus realibus personalibus et mixtus assisa noue dissesine ac omnibus aliis placitis . . quibuscumque dictos maiorem constabularios et societatem . . seu terras tenementa . . debita seu aliqua alia

eorundem maioris constabulariorum et societatis . . tangentibus concernentibus seu respicientibus. Ac vltius volumus et . . concedimus per presentes prefatis maiori constabulariis et societati . . et successoribus suis quod dicta societas . . valeat et possit . . libere et licite de tempore in tempus deinceps imperpetuum convenire et congregacionem et assemblacionem de seipsis facere tam infra dictam civitatem nostram London' quam alibi ubicunque in talibus et consimilibus modo et forma prout dicta societas mercatorum stapule dicte ville Calicie . . in dicta ville Calicie . . facere consueuerunt vel potuerunt. Ac quod apud dictam ciuitatem nostram London' seu in quouis alio loco vbi dicta stapula Anglie fore contigerit et mercandise eiusdem stapule vendicioni exponende de tempore in tempus possint et valeant de eorum communi assensu vel de communi assensu maioris partis societatis mercatorum stapule Anglie adtunc et ibidem congregate et assemblate libere de seipsis nominare et eligere vnum maiorem pro anno adtunc futuro vel minus duraturum permansurum et continuaturum ac duos constabularios per tres menses vel minus ad eiusdem societatis . . vel maioris partis eiusdem . . ibidem congregate et assemblate voluntatem et libitum duraturos permansuros et continuaturos. Ac eciam quod . . de tempore in tempus imperpetuum valeant et possint libere et licite nominare eligere et admittere in dictam societatem . . ac in dictum corpus per presentes corporatum et stabilitum omnes et singulas personas quascunque ex eiusdem societatis . . communi assensu vel maioris partis eiusdem . . ac . . nominare eligere et constituere omnes et singulos tales huiusmodi et consimiles officarios ministros et seruientes eiusdem stapule Anglie pro anno ad tunc futuro seu minis ad eiusdem societatis . . voluntatem et libitum duraturos et deseruituros quos et quales . . . expedire seu commodum et necessarium fore pro bonis ordine regimine et gubernacione predictae stapule Anglie et societatis eiusdem videbitur. Et quod eosdem sic nominatos electos et constitutos . . pro delictis et offensis malo regimine seu aliqua occasione vel causa rationabili quacunque ab officiis ministeriis seu seruiis suis amouere excludere ac alia [*sic*] vice et in loco seu locis eorundem sic amotorum seu exclusorum vel mortuorum nominare eligere et preficere ibidem durare deseruire et vt predictur continuare. Necnon facere ordinare constituere et exequi omnia et singula alia necessaria et oportuna dictam societatem . . eorum

statum et regimen tangencia seu qualitercumque concernencia de tempore in tempus libere et licite valeant et possint imperpetuum in tam amplis et beneficialibus modo et forma prout dicti mercatores . . dicte stapule in dicta villa Calicie . . facere consueuerunt . . . Ac vltcrius . . volumus . . et concedimus prefatis maiori constabulariis et societati mercatorum stapule Anglie predictae et societatibus suis quod deinceps stapula lanarum et pellium lanutarum ab hoc regno nostro Anglie traducendarum et transportandarum per mercatores dicte societatis . . tenebitur seruabitur et custodietur in opidis et ciuitatibus de Brugis in Flandria de Middelburgo in Zelandia et de Bargis super Zone in Brabantia seu in eorum aliqua tam diu quam dicte societati . . videbitur expediri vel in aliquo alio loco conueniente infra regnum Anglie vel alibi extra regnum Anglie per nos heredes vel successores nostros per litteras patentes magno sigillo Anglie sigillandas assignando limitando et appunctando si ad aliquod tempus imposterum nobis heredibus vel successoribus nostris ita visum fuerit expedire ac quod dicta stapula lanarum et pellium lanutarum ibidem de tempore in tempus morabitur . . et erit sub ordine . . maioris constabulariorum et societatis mercatorum stapule . . in consimilibus modo et forma prout dicta societas mercatorum stapule in predicta villa Calicie vel mercatores eiusdem . . regebantur . . infra dictam villam Calicie seu aliter . . . Volumus . . et concedimus quod predicta stapula . . de aliquo predictarum ciuitatum opidorum vel locorum de Brugis Middelburgo seu Bargis predictis vel de aliquo alio loco vbi predicta stapula Anglie imposterum teneri . . contigerit de cetero non amoueatur . . nisi monicio ac noticia inde . . per litteras patentes magno sigillo Anglie sigillatas prefatis maiori constabulariis et societati mercatorum stapule . . dirigendas et prefato maiori vel vni constabulariorum stapule . . pro tempore existencium deliberandas per spacium nonem mensium ante quamlibet talem amocionem vel translationem detur. Preterea . . damus et concedimus prefatis maiori et constabulariis et societati . . et successoribus suis imperpetuum . . plenariam et integram potestatem . . quod ipsi et omnes et singuli mercatores eiusdem societatis . . et apprenticii eorum . . de tempore in tempus imperpetuum sine impedimento . . libere et licite et impune valeant et possint . . emere negociari marcari omnia genera et species lanarum infra hoc regnum . . crescentes . . et contractus facere et convenire pro eisdem cum omnibus et singulis subditis nos-

tris . . et aliis personis quibuscumque cuiuscumque status seu conditionis sint vel fuerint eadem genere lanarum impaccata et in saccos seu in poketos redacta compressa et signata modo et forma consuetis et vsitatis. Ac eciam omnes et omnimodas pelles lanutas eskippare . . ab et extra omnes et singulos portus et portum huius regni nostri Anglie pro eskippacione . . lanarum et pellium lanutarum antehac limitatos assignatos seu consuetos vsque ad opidum opida civitates seu vrbes de Brugis Middilburg seu Bergis super Zone predictis seu vsque ad eorum aliquod vel vsque ad aliquod aliud opidum urbem seu locum transmarinum vel alibi infra regnum Anglie vbi dicta stapula Anglie fore contigerit per assignacionem nostram aut heredum vel successorum nostrorum. Ac ea ibidem vendicioni exponere et vendere quibuscumque personis et cuicumque persone Ac eciam quod prefati mercatores societatis stapule Anglie predictae . . vendicioni exponere ac vendere et alienare possint et valeant infra hoc regnum nostrum Anglie vbicumque lanas refutatas et reiectas vocatas refuce wolles et particulas lane vocatas lookes quibuscumque personis in talibus et consimilibus modo et forma prout dicta societas mercatorum stapule dicte ville Calicie aut mercatores dicte stapule . . facere vendere vel alienare potuerunt absque impetitione . . nostrum heredum vel successorum nostrorum aut aliorum officiariorum ministrorum seu subditorum vel ligeorum nostrorum. Et absque aliqua pena . . ea occasione sustinenda, aliquo statuto . . vel consuetudine ante hac habitis . . contrarium in aliquo non obstantibus. Ac volumus et ordinamus per presentes quod in et apud quemlibet portum huius regni nostri Anglie vbi lane et pelles lanute in nauibus imponentur vel eskippabuntur ad transportandum et traducendum vt prefertur per mercatores stapule Anglie predictae . . vbi maior eiusdem stapule tunc non fuerit commorans seu residens quedam indenture de tempore in tempus confecte erant inter collectores custume et subsidii lanarum et pellium lanutarum in huiusmodi portu vt prefertur eskippandarum assignatos ex vna parte et tales et huiusmodi mercator et mercatores qui eadem ad stapulam predictam . . traducere et transportare voluerint . . ex altera parte spacificando ac ostendendo sigillatim tam nomina mercatorum ibidem eskippancium quam quantitatem bonorum et mercandizarum ibidem in naues mercatorum vt prefertur eskippatorum. Cuius quidem indenture vna pars sigillabitur sigillo

nostro . . vocato le Cocket ac altera pars eiusdem sigillabitur sigillo . . mercatoris . . eadem transportantis . . Ita quod iidem collectores . . possint et valeant . . vnam partem indenture predicte habere penes se remanentem ad exhibendum et ostendendum in scaccario nostro . . ea intencione vt iidem mercatores . . onerentur . . ibidem de et pro solucione custume et subsidii nobis . . inde debitis et soluendis et alteram partem eiusdem indenture dicto sigillo nostro vocato le Cocket sigillatam mercator et transportator . . earundem lanarum et pellium lanutarum immediate post transfretacionem et arriuacionem nauium apud stapulam predictam ostendet deliberabit . . maiori aut eius locumtenenti et constabulariis stapule Anglie predicte . . vel eorum vni. Quamquidem partem indenture iidem maior vel eius locumtenens et constabularii vel eorum vnus infra spacium trium mensium post recepcionem eiusdem certificabunt et deliberabunt in scaccarium nostrum . . Et si maior stapule Anglie predicte in portu vbi huiusmodi lane et pelles lanatas in nauibus onerabuntur seu eskipabuntur commorans seu residens sit . . tunc volumus quod indenture fiant inter collectores seu collectorem custume et subsidii eiusdem portus . . ex vna parte et maiorem stapule . . ex altera parte specificantes ac ostendentes sigillatim tam nomina mercatorum ibidem eskippantium quam quantitatem bonorum et mercandizarum ibidem in naues oneratorum et vt prefertur eskippatorum consimilibus modo et forma prout superius specificatur et limitatur Ac quod maior stapule . . in tali casu indenturas predictas infra tres menses post recepcionem eorundem in scaccario nostro . . ostendet et deliberabit . . Volumus insuper per presentes quod predicti maior constabularii et societas . . et eorum successores de tempore in tempus infra spacium trium mensium proximorum post eskippacionem et transfretacionem extra regnum Anglie aliquarum lanarum et pellium lanutarum ad stapulam predictam transportandarum . . bene et fideliter persoluent seu satisfacient . . nomine custume et subsidii nobis . . ad receptam scaccarii nostri . . pro quolibet sacco lane vbi quando et quamdiu numerus saccorum lane eskippatorum vel eskippandorum aliquo tempore infra spacium vnus anni non excedebat numerum trium millium saccorum tres libras bone et legalis monete Anglie et pro quolibet sacco lane excedente dictum numerum trium millium saccorum aliquo tempore infra spacium vnus anni eskippato . . quatuor

marcas bone et legalis monete Anglie et non vltra et pro qualibet pelle lanuta duos denarios legalis monete Anglie absque vltiore dilacione fraude seu covina Et insuper . . volumus ac per presentes . . concedimus prefatis maiori constabulariis et societati . . et eorum successoribus imperpetuum . . quod . . habeant teneant vtentur gaudeant et exercean . . tam infra hoc regnum nostrum Anglie quam alibi tot talia tanta eadum huiusmodi et consimilia libertates consuetudines franchises priuilegia potestates auctoritates prehemincias iurisdicciones annuitates commoditates ac omnia alia iura quecumque cuiuscumque generis speciei nature qualitatis seu condicionis fuit . . non existencia repugnancia siue contraria hiis litteris nostris patentibus vel alicui articulo in eisdem contento et specificato quot et qualia quanta et que predicti maior et constabularii et societas mercatorum stapule dicte ville Calicie . . habuerunt exercuerunt gauisi aut vsi fuerunt . . racione vel pre-textu aliquorum statutorum siue actum parlamenti aut aliquarum litterarum patencium per aliquem progenitorum nostrorum quondam Regum Anglie habitatum siue factarum aut alicuius prescripcionis seu consuetudinis aut aliquo alio legali modo iure seu titulo quibuscumque aliqua forisfactura non vsu seu abusu earundem seu eorundem alicuius antehac habita seu facta seu aliqua alia re materia causa lege statuto consuetudine vsu proclamacione surrepcione et capcione predictae ville Calicie seu continuacione eiusdem in manibus et possessione Francorum predictorum aut aliqua alia re causa vel materia quacumque in aliquo non obstante Et denique . . . volumus et concedimus prefatis maiori constabulariis et societati mercatorum dicte stapule Anglie et eorum successoribus imperpetuum . . quod le littere nostre patentes ac omnia et singula concessiones . . in eisdem contenta et specificata accipientur capientur et interpretantur ac tam coram nobis consilio nostro in Stellata Camera nostra quam coram nobis in Banco nostro coram iusticiariis nostris in comuni Banco coram thesaurario et baronibus scaccarii nostri et in quibuscumque curiis nostris . . ac in omnibus aliis locis infra dominia nostra . . benignius et magis graciose ac in fauorem maioris constabulariorum et societatis mercatorum dicte stapule Anglie pro tempore existencium et cuiuslibet eiusdem societatis et apprenticiorum eorundem et eorum cuiuslibet ac maxime et precipue in eorum commodum et vtilitatem ac fortissime . . versus nos heredes et suc-

cessores nostros aliqua progiatua preheminencia lege consuetudine statuto siue actu parlamenti seu aliqua re causa vel materia quacumque incontrarium antehac habita ordinata facta seu vsitata in aliquo non obstante. Ac eciam volumus etc. Eo quod expressa mencio etc. In cuius rei etc. Teste rege apud Westmonasterium xxx die Maii.

Per breve de privato sigillo etc.

CHARTER GRANTED BY JAMES I TO THE MERCHANTS OF THE STAPLE
OF ENGLAND, 1617.

Sig Manual Grants and Warrants, James I, vol. 8, no. 13.

JAMES R.

Rex omnibus ad quos etc. salutem. Cum Societas Mercatorum Stapule sit et de antiquo fuerit inter ceteras societates mercatorum huius regni nostri Anglie vna ex praecipuis et fama dignissima imbutu stabilita et confirmata cum diversis privelegiis iurisdictionibus libertatibus et imunitatibus tam per diversas literas patentes progenitorum nostrorum sub magno Sigillo Anglie sigillatas quam per diversa acta et statuta facta edita et ordinata in diversis huius regni parlamenti Et cum domina Elizabetha nuper Regina Anglie soror nostra precharissima pro meliori continuacione et stabilitate dicte antike societatis et incorporacionis per literas suas patentes sub magno sigillo suo Anglie confectas gerentes datum tricesimo die Maii anno regni sui tercio de gracia sua speciali ac ex certa sciencia et mero motu suis pro se heredibus et successoribus suis voluerit ordinaverit et concesserit quod. . . [Here follows an inspeimus of Elizabeth's Charter of 1561.] Cumque nos super matura deliberacione inde habita luculenter invenimus continuacionem vel permissionem alicuius vltius transportationis lanarum vel pellium lanatarum ad dictas villas de Brugis Midelburgo ac Bargis super Zone vel ad aliquas alias quascumque partes exterar et transmarinas ad grave damnum et preiudicium status et rei publice huius Regni nostri Anglie tendere Sciatis quod nos ad premissa consideracionem habentes pro vtilitate regni nostri Anglie ac pro melioracione dicte societatis mercatorum stapule Anglie et de advisamento consilii nostri pro nobis heredibus et successoribus nostris volumus et ordinamus ac per presentes declaramus et significamus voluntatem et beneplacitum nostrum dicto Maiori Constabulariis et Societati Mercatorum Stapule

Anglie ac omnibus aliis quibuscumque quorum interest seu interesse poterit in hac parte Quod Stapula lanarum et pellium lanatarum removeatur a dictis civitatibus . . de Brugis Midelburgo et Bergis super Zone Ac per presentes precipimus prefatis Maiori Constabulariis et Societati . . . quod ipsi et eorum singuli infra spacium novem mensium proxime sequentum post datum harum nostrarum litterarum patencium lanas pelles lanatas res et mercandisas suas amoveant et transferant de predictis civitatibus . . de Brugis Midelburgo seu Bergis predictis . . et quod posthac dicta Societas Mercatorum Stapule Anglie predicte vel aliqui eorum lanas seu pelles lanatas non eskipabunt nec transportabunt ad dictas civitates . . de Brugis Midelburgo seu Bergis super Zone predictis . . Et vltcrius volumus ordinamus et constituimus pro nobis heredibus et successoribus nostris Quod posthac deinceps Stapula lanarum et pellium lanatarum huius regni nostri Anglie tenebitur servabitur et custodietur infra hoc regnum nostrum Anglie in civitatibus villis oppidis et locis infranominatis et non alibi, videlicet, in civitatibus London' ac suburbiis eiusdem, Canterburie, Exeter Norwic, Worrc. Lincoln Winton et in villis Shrewsbury et Oswestrie in Comitatu [*sic*] Salopie Northampton et Brackley in comitatu Northamptonie Reading in comitatu Berk' Cirencester in comitatu Gloucestrie Kendall in comitatu Westmerlandie Sherborne in comitatu Dorsett, Devises in comitatu Wiltes Taunton Deane in comitatu Somersett Ratsdale in comitatu Lancastrie, Richmond, Wakerfield Hallifax in comitatu Eboraci Coggeshall in comitatu Essex et Woodstock in comitatu Oxon' Et vltcrius nos ex animo affectantes Stapulam predictam ac Mercatores et Societatem eiusdem pristino decori felicitati opulentie et prosperitati quantum in nobis est restituere et reddere eisdemque Mercatoribus et Societati non minores aut inferiores libertates iurisdictiones privelegia imunitates et emolumenta quam retroactis temporibus ex progenitorum nostrorum Regum Anglie munificencia et liberalitate habuerunt dare et conferre ac vtile reipublice nostre existimantes marcandisas lanarum sub regimine et gubernacione Maioris Constabulariorum et Societatis Mercatorum Stapule Anglie reduci et stabiliri de advisamento consilii nostri et de gracia nostra speciali ac ex certa sciencia et mero motu nostris dedimus concessimus et confirmavimus ac per presentes damus concedimus et confirmamus Maiori Constabulariis et Societati Mercatorum Stapule Anglie et successoribus suis . . .

licenciam libertatem facultatem plenam liberam et integram potestatem et auctoritatem quod ipsi . . . per seipsos . . . et per apprenticios servientes et ministros eorum . . . et alios quoscumque in eorum . . . dominibus . . . inhabitantes . . . singulis temporibus et de tempore in tempus imperpetuum sine impedimento . . . libere licite et impune emere acquirere recipere negotiari et mercari Et pro eisdem convenire ac facere inire barganias et contractus promissiones dare et recipere cum omnibus et singulis Subditis nostris . . . ac tam cum ovium et decimarum proprietariis quam etiam aliis personis quibuscumque cuiuscumque status vel condicionis sint . . . Ac licet lane huiusmodi empte non sint . . . vel pro eisdem contractum non sit . . . pro provisione Stapule vel ad eskippendum ad Stapulam Calicie Ac quod ipsi . . . sine impedimento . . . in dictis civitatibus burgis et villis supranominatis et pro stapula assignatis et ordinatis videlicet in civitatibus London' et suburbii eiusdem . . . vel in allis quibuscumque civitatibus burgis villis sive locis infra hoc regnum Anglie seu dominium Wallie impostorum . . . assignandis . . . ad omnia tempus et tempora anni et super quocumque die vel diebus in hebdomado preter diem et dies dominicas omnes et omnimodas lanas non solum lanas refutas reiectas et viles vocatas refuse course wolles et lockes et lanas non aptas pro stapula sed etiam omnes et omnimodas alias lanas cuiuscumque sint . . . generis speiei nature vel condicionis crescentes . . . infra regnum nostrum Anglie et dominium Wallie predicta . . . possint ac valeant . . . libere licite et impune venditioni exponere vendere et alienare quibuscumque personis . . . et pro eisdem convenire contractus barganias et promissiones inire et facere cum quibuscumque personis . . . separalibus statutis et actis editis in diversis et separalibus parliamentis separatim tentis in anno decimo quarto Edwardi nuper Regis Anglie quarti et in annis quinto et sexto Edwardi nuper Regis Anglie sexti intitulis An Act lymittinge the tymes for buyinge and sellinge of wolles et aliquibus aliis Statutis vel aliquo alio Statuto . . . non obstante. Et insuper . . . volumus . . . concedimus et confirmamus prefatis Maiori Constabulariis et Societati Mercatorum Stapule Anglie predictae et eorum successoribus imperpetuum . . . quod prefati Maior Constabularii et societas . . . ac eorum successores imperpetuum . . . habeant teneant vtantur gaudeant et exercent . . . infra hoc regnum nostrum Anglie et dominium Wallie

predicta apud civitates burgos villas oppida et loca predicta pro stapula assignata et ordinata . . omnia et omnimoda libertates . . ac omnia et singula iura et emolumenta quecumque cuiuscumque generis specei nature qualitatis sue condicionis sint . . que ante datum harum literarum patencium fuere data concessa vel confirmata dictis Maiori Constabulariis et societati Mercatorum Stapule vel predecessoribus suis per dictam nuper Reginam Elizabetham vel per aliquem progenitorum nostrorum Regum vel Reginarum Anglie vel per aliqua Statuta . . in aliquibus parliamentis . . edita quocumque nomine . . vel additione nominis seu incorporacionis tunc vel vnquam antehac censebantur vocabantur seu nominabantur et in tam amplis modo et forma ad omnes intenciones et proposiciones prout predicti Maior Constabularii et Societas Mercatorum Stapule vel predecessores sui . . in aliquo tempore . . quando eskipacio sive transportacio lanarum seu pellium lanatarum extra hoc regnum Anglie fuere licenciata seu non licenciata prohibita seu non prohibita habuerunt vsi seu gauisi fuerunt. Et vlterius . . damus concedimus et confirmamus prefatis Maiori Constabulariis et Societati . . et successoribus suis quod ipsi et successores sui de tempore in tempus imperpetuum possint et valeant habere tenere et exercere regimen et gubernacionem totius Societatis predictae . . apud civitatem London' in loco ibidem vocato Ledden Hall vel alibi tam infra quam extra civitatem predictam ubicumque predictis Maiori Constabulariis et Societati . . vel maiori parti eorundem in ea parte visum fuerit statuere et ordinare. Et quod omnes et singuli predicti mercatores stapule Anglie tam presentes quam futuri apud predictas civitates burgos villas oppida seu loca predicta pro stapula assignata vel ordinata . . inhabitantes commorantes vel mercaturam suam [*sic*] lanarum et pellium lanatarum quoque modo exercentes sint et erint habeantur et teneantur sub regimine et gubernacione predictorum Maioris Constabulariorum et Societatis . . et successorum suorum vel maioris partis eorundem insimul assemblate sic vt prefertur habita tenta et exercita . . apud Ledden Hall London predictam vel alibi vbicumque per predictos Maiorem Constabularios et Societatem . . secundum libertates leges et ordinaciones . . predictas. Proviso semper quod hec presens concessio seu aliqua in ea contenta non extendatur restringere seu reprimere aliquem . . nativorum subditorum nostrorum . . pannarium . . nec aliquos alios huiusmodi nativos qui convertunt lanas in filum laneum vel in aliquod genus pannorum laneorum

vel in aliam manufacturam factam de lanis. Qui ipsi et eorum aliqui eorum factores apprenticii et ministri inhabitantes in ipsorum . . domibus mansionalibus . . possint ac valeant . . hoc licite et impune emere acquirere et mercari omnia genera lanarum de aliqua persona . . ad convertendum easdem lanas ad huiusmodi proposita et intenciones prout ipsi legitime facere possent ante datum harum literarum nostrarum patencium Eo quod expressa mencio de certitudine premissorum seu eorum alicuius aut de aliis donis sive concessionibus per nos vel per aliquem progenitorum sive predecessorum nostrorum prefatis Maiori Constabulariis et Societati Mercatorum Stapule Anglie predicte sive eorum alicui ante hec tempora factis in presentibus minime facta existit. Aut aliquo Statuto Actu ordinatione proclamacione aut aliqua re causa vel materia quacumque in aliquo non obstante.

In cuius rei testimonium etc.

ur
Ex — per
—

H : YELUERTON.

It may please your most excellent Ma :^{tie}

This conteyneth yo^r : Ma^{ties} Confirmacion to the Marchantes of the Staple of a Chartre graunted them by the late Queene Elizabeth in the thirde yeare of her Raigne.

And yo^r Ma^{ty} doth heereby transferr the Staple for Wooles assigned by the said late Queene to Middleborough Burgis and Burgen an Zoane unto divers Citties and principall Townes in this yo^r Realme of England where the Merchantes of the Staple are to putt their wooles to sale.

And is done by order from the L :^{ges}
of yo^r Ma^{tes} privy Councell.

HENRY YELUERTON

[Endorsed:]

Grant to the Marchantes of the Staple,
Grant of the Merchants of the Staple.

Expeditum apud Westmonasterium
vicesimo sexto die Martii anno regni
Regis Iacobi decimo quinta

L. WINDEBANK.

[The letters patent¹ are dated 29 March.]

¹ Patent Roll, 15 James I, part 6.

TABLE SHOWING THE LOCATION OF THE STAPLE OF ENGLAND FROM 1285 to 1617.

1285.	Staple located at Dordrecht.
1297 (circa).	" " " Bruges.
1302.	" " " Antwerp.
1314.	" " " St. Omer.
1315.	" " " Antwerp.
1320.	" " " St. Omer.
1325.	" " " Bruges.
1326 (May 24).	" on the continent abolished, and staples held at certain places in the realm. No English Staple on the continent from 1326-1338.
1327.	All staples abolished from September till Christmas.
1328-1332.	All staples abolished.
1332-1334.	Staples held in the realm.
1334-1337.	All staples abolished.
1337-1338.	Staples held in the realm.
1338-1341.	Staple located at Antwerp.
1341-1353.	Staple located at Bruges.
1347.	Staple for tin, lead, feathers and woolen cloth removed to Calais. Staple for wool remained at Bruges.
1353-1363.	Staple for wool abolished on the continent, and held at certain places in England.
1363-1369.	Staple located at Calais.
1369-1373.	Staple on the continent abolished; staples held in the realm.
1373-1383.	Staple located at Calais.
1383-1388.	" " " Middleburgh.
1388-1391.	" " " Calais.
1391-1392.	Staple at Calais abolished; staples held in the realm.
1392-1558.	Staple located at Calais.
1558.	Staple removed from Calais to Middleburgh.
1558-1617.	Staple located at Middleburgh, Bruges, Bergen-op-Zoom or elsewhere in the Low Countries.
1617.	Staple on the continent abolished; staples held at various places in England, Ireland and Wales.

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